

The gospel of Luke is written with a Gentile or Greek-speaking cultured people in mind. In writing the gospel account Luke focuses upon the role and importance of women and the poor, more than the other three gospels, and relates the most parable teachings of Jesus in his story of who Jesus is, how he was and is in the world, and how that changes even us.

As we read through Luke structured by the narrative lectionary, we draw close to turning point in the gospel, when Jesus (as Luke writes) sets his face on Jerusalem: his climactic preaching of a reformed faith and new humanity, which leads to his public execution for heresy and insurrection on the cross. We mark this season, or passion as we often call it, during and with the season of Lent, which begins today, Ash Wednesday. Today's proposed reading follows Sunday's, in which Jesus is transfigured and reveals himself as the Messiah: *more* than human, *other* than what the disciples expected. Here Jesus continues on his journey, through a land of people considered both heretical and less than equal to the Jews.

**way:** These disciples are sent, like John the Baptizer before Jesus, to prepare his way (word used to describe the early Christians "the people of the Way" – and symbol of discipleship). It recalls the prophecy of Isaiah 40:1-3 "Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,... A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken." Curiously those sent to prepare his way continue to demonstrate their weakness and misunderstanding of the identity, power and purpose of Jesus.

**SAMARITANS:** the residents of Samaria were looked down upon as less than equal and heretics by most Jews because of history. When the Jewish nation was conquered, deported as hostages and exiled by the Assyrian and Babylonian empire in the 7-5<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE the Samaritans were left behind. In the exile time, during which Judaism underwent a sort of reformation, their spiritual practices diverged, specifically with the Samaritans considering their tradition the most pure (untainted by the Babylonian Captivity) whereas the Israelites thought the opposite. The major issue between Jews and Samaritans has always been the location of the Chosen Place to worship God; Mount Zion in Jerusalem according to the Jewish faith or Mount Gerizim according to the Samaritan faith. In the gospels, we see that historically one would avoid traveling through Samaria to avoid contact with these deplorables.

We see here diverse Samaritan responses to Jesus. In verse 53 the village doesn't welcome him, whereas later in 56 and on we see people in other Samaritan villages claiming to follow Jesus.

**the Son of Man:** This messianic title refers back to an apocalyptic vision in the prophetic book of Daniel, equating Jesus as either the one prophesied in the scripture, or it's a possibly an expression to talk about one who is a human being (a son of man). In Daniel chapter 7 the prophet glimpses the judgment by God [the Ancient One] of the God-opposed powers of the earth and the coming of God's agent of peace as the rightful and ultimate leader [one like a son of man]....

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## SCRIPTURES FOR ASH WEDNESDAY 3.1.2017

### Luke 9:51-62

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

<sup>51</sup> When the days drew near for [Jesus] to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. <sup>52</sup> And he sent messengers ahead of him. **On their way** they entered a village of **THE SAMARITANS** to make ready for him; <sup>53</sup> but they did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. <sup>54</sup> When his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" <sup>55</sup> But he turned and rebuked them. <sup>56</sup> Then they went on to another village.

<sup>57</sup> As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "**I WILL FOLLOW YOU** wherever you go."

<sup>58</sup> And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the **Son of Man** has nowhere to lay his head." <sup>59</sup> To another he said, "**FOLLOW ME.**" But he said, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." <sup>60</sup> But Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." <sup>61</sup> Another said, "**I WILL FOLLOW YOU**, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home." <sup>62</sup> Jesus said to him, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

### Questions for the practice of Examen & Contemplation

**\*What strikes you in this passage ? How does it interact with what you're living these days, or thinking about?**

**\*This story is one containing several statements about discipleship, follow Jesus as master, Lord, teacher and spiritual guide. His invitation is radical and immediate. How do you respond to the way in his he extends his invitation in this text? How do you find it challenging your own life and way of following Jesus?**

**\*How is following Jesus as Lord something that calls you to rupture or divorce from your own preconceived ideas about life, your identity and relationships? How have you found that to be a blessing which you might not have been able to imagine?**

**\*On this day of Ash Wednesday, when we focus on the theme of repentance, what obstacles do you need to renounce in your life of faith, following Jesus?**

“9 As I watched, thrones were set in place, and an Ancient One took his throne, his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames,... A thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood attending him. The court sat in judgment, and the books were opened. ... 13 As I watched in the night visions, I saw one like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. And he came to the Ancient One and was presented before him. 14 To him was given dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed.” Curiously here Jesus asserts that the “son of man” is itinerant, homeless, on the move - a different sort of messianic establishment that expected.

**FOLLOW:** ἀκολουθέω [akoloutheó]: to accompany, attend, follow. In a larger sense, the word means: to become the disciples of someone, to cleave to their example, to walk in their footsteps, to live as they do, joining in their way of life. It's while the disciples are following Jesus on the way that they encounter other followers of Jesus who makes excuses for not following him in his way.

**Parallel in Matthew:** Mt 8:18-21 tells the same episodes as Luke 9:57-62, but only contains the first two conversations.

The commands of Jesus contain a double commandment: First one as adhere immediately to the call to discipleship, no qualms or questions or hesitations about it. Secondly, and as a consequence of the immediacy of discipleship there is a rupture with the tradition familial order and the religious obligation to family (which was paramount in their culture). In Luke 8:21 But Jesus teaches a new family order and vision: “My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.” Those who prefer to prioritize such family values seem to prefer death, preferring to accompany the dying. Jesus says that if you want to live you have to follow a different way, the one he proposes, announcing the Kingdom of God.

Is Jesus rejecting family relationships? Or is he refocusing, proposing a different way of living where family is not a religious obligation but part of a way of living in which the ultimate family with which one identifies is the House of the Lord. The saying seem to condemn those who have hearts divided, unable to completely and radically follow Jesus.

