

The Third Sunday after Pentecost

Year of the Lord 2019

Luke 9

**“Holy Spirit, Light Divine, shine upon this heart of mine;
Chase the shades of night away; turn the darkness into day!”
“Let me see my Savior’s face; let me all HIS beauties trace!
Show those glorious truths to me which are only known to
Thee!”**

Luke 9:51–62 51 When the days drew near for [Jesus] to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.

52 And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him. 53 But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. 54 And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, “Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?” 55 But he turned and rebuked them. 56 And they went on to another village.

57 As they were going along the road, someone said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.” 58 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.” 59 To another he said, “Follow me.” But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” 60 And Jesus said to him, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” **61 Yet another said, “I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.” 62 Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”**

In the Name of Jesus:

Fear not! Who is FIT for the Kingdom of heaven? He is Christ our Lord, the Savior! Jesus has every confidence in the ‘kingdom of God.’ What starts to get slippery is when He calls out to us, ‘Follow Me!’—preaching to us the Good News: that WE may have every confidence in the ‘kingdom of God’ now and for good. HE had ‘set His face’ to go to Jerusalem; where David was King; He is David’s Son and heir. Where David is, there is the God of Abraham, heaven. And look what Jesus bestest students have turned THIS David into:

54 And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, “Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?”

That’s a quote from an Elijah episode different from the one we read today. But even quoting the Bible does not impress Jesus—when the ANSWER to ignorance of God, opposition to His kingdom, is fire and brimstone: ‘Oooh! NOW yer gonna get it!’ How practiced are we in such words, such looks, such attitudes; meaning, such ‘FALSE PREACHING’ about God and His Son and His Kingdom; His Kingdom NOW!

Such fire worked somehow BEFORE Christ was laid in the manger and nailed to the cross. But read the Elijah lesson—Second Kings, chapter One. Finally one fellow cries out for the fire to be put out, for mercy; and even Elijah did not ignore such a prayer!

My dear ones: the Lord is only happy when He is found by those who ARE...NOT...SEEKING...HIM! Meaning, as if THEIR seeking, OUR seeking, somehow FINDS the One Who seeks and saves US!

So also, ‘following Him’—which all we disciples do!—Christ is King in heaven when OUR following Him is NOT defined by what WE do, over against what ANYONE...ELSE...DOES with Jesus, with God, with Heaven, with the Kingdom. Proof? Glad you asked!

³³ And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. ³⁴ And Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” And they cast lots to divide his garments. (Luke 23 ESV) [All the while, the taunts and jeers were unending: ‘King of the Jews! FINE King this! Where’s your KINGDOM?!’ We are just too scared, my dear ones: can this REALLY be the Final, Lasting King?!]

If EVER there was a time for HEAVEN to turn all ‘FAHR-‘n-BRIMSTONE’ on men, it was THAT FRIDAY! Instead, the prayer

is for pardon from the Father—OOOOHHHH! What a King!
What a different David!

And how far from whiny Elijah! [Yes! Pastor just called Elijah
‘whiny’!]

‘Elijah, what are you doing here?!’ A clever commentator told me this week that the LORD had SENT Elijah everywhere ELSE Elijah went. But poor Elijah, on his OWN initiative, saw the sins of Israel; then ran back to the womb, back to the Mount where MOSES delivered the Commandments. ‘Your people did THIS; your people did THAT; and don’t get me started about the PRESIDENT! (I mean, KING Ahab!)’

JESUS was already on the way, my dear ones! ‘Go from here! And anoint kings and prophets by MY SAY-SO—because it ALL...HAPPENS...BY...MY...SAY-SO!’

Happily Elijah learned that day! Even PROPHETS can be taught! So, there may be hope for pastors too! And when EliSHa asked for a slight delay, EliJAh knew his happy place: ‘What have I DONE to you?! This is all the Lord’s thing!’

One man was cheered on by this Good News That Bad, Bad Day. And can we imagine a worse spot to be in; even in this world?:

³⁹ One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him,^[d] saying, “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!” ⁴⁰ But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?” ⁴¹ And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.” ⁴² And he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” ⁴³ And he said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

There is a Judgment of Fire to come, my fellow disciples of Jesus. And the judgment BEGINS, the Word says, with the house of God,

even us! For if we follow SUCH a King, and pray for SUCH a Kingdom to come—heaven’s fire SPENT on the King Himself can ONLY be fanned into a harmful blaze again by those who are crying out to be saved from the FIRE. In a word, a disciple. In two words, ‘Follow Me!’

My dear ones, let us confess our sins before God our Heavenly Father, seeking His Grace, for the sake of Christ, and saying, God be merciful to ME, a sinner. ‘The healthy do not need a physician! The sick do! I have NOT come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.’

‘Paradise’ is a Persian word the Jews grabbed hold of and used. Only kings—GREAT KINGS!—could afford a planted and manicured park back then; ESPECIALLY in the dry Middle East! For the king to call you into his park, his sculptured garden, his paradise—Oh! You KNOW that you are IN with the King!

We are following the condemned criminal to our King’s pleasure park, my dear ones. Ahead of even THAT MAN are the men who executed our King. With such a certainty ahead of us, what type of people should we be?

Breathing fire from our mouths? Snorting lava from our snouts? ‘Oh, yeah?!’ ‘Sez YOU!’ ‘YOU are never going to learn!’

Happily, the water of our Baptism pledges to people like US that the worst of all fires have been extinguished by the gentle Spirit of Jesus. OUR huffing and puffing and firing back—

By the way, my dear ones. I am sorry if I am not speaking to YOUR heart this morning. All this shooting back at people who fire at me first—I’m just going on and on about MY worst of all sins! Maybe you too know how to wound those who have wounded you first. But I have to believe y’all are rookies compared to me. That’s why y’all are supposed to pray for your miserable pastor.

Huffing and puffing, smoke and fire and thunder and lightning— sounds like Mount Sinai, doesn't it, my friends? No doubt, Elijah—at his worst moment!— wanted heaven to show its power like that! 'You did it for MOSES! Howbout for ME?!'

But, what do we read, even in the OLD and PASSING covenant with heaven?

Storm? Not the real God.

Earthquake? Maybe Poseidon, Neptune. NOT the Fear of Isaac, Jacob's Lord.

FIRE! 'But the Lord, the God of Abraham, was NOT in the fire!'

Hallelujah! And that was even BEFORE Christ was raised from the dead and Ascended to rule everything for His Church!

The still, small voice; the gentle wind; the low whisper. The fire of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit.

Rejoice in your Baptism, morning, noon and night, dear disciples! As The Lord rains down from heaven on the good and evil alike, just ANYONE can be baptized!

Kento Tiger's grandmother is the treasurer at church here. She pays all the bills. Kento Tiger's grandma told me last week: 'The little guy kept mom and dad up all night, so they couldn't be here. But they want the little heathen baptized next Sunday. Can we do that?'

And what did your poor pastor respond? 'Well, Kento Tiger's grandma, did you pay the water bill? If the water's on, that's about all we need!'

Water; and a low whisper, the gentler Spirit of Jesus; Who teaches us also: when hell gets all whipped up and starts to erupt below you, in you, around you—one of the happiest, simplest gifts heaven has given you in your Baptism by This King, is simply to turn down the volume; and teach the next poor man, the next poor sinner, the next poor child of Adam who is never going to change at heart: God and His Kingdom are near, when MY voice toward you is still, small gentle and low.

‘Howzabout a walk in the King’s Park, friend? Let us go THERE, friend, in the Name of Jesus!’