

Reflection: Luke 9: 57 – 62 Linda E Hunter

Today's reading marks a turning point in Jesus' ministry. Just previously, at the Transfiguration (Luke 9.28-36), the disciples gain an incredible glimpse of Jesus' heavenly glory. But now the Galilean mission is over, resolutely, Jesus sets out for Jerusalem, knowing that his trial, death and resurrection await him there. There is a stark change of tone and Luke's words have a new sense of urgency.

Now, Jesus embraces suffering, even choosing to go to a hostile Samaritan village. The antagonism of Jews and Samaritans was strong in Jesus' time, highlighting the worst of religious intolerance and racism. He is often seen wanting to break through the barriers and walls separating these people. Sometimes it worked, as with the woman of Samaria and in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Other times, he moves on, knowing that for one time at least, nothing can be done.

On the road to Jerusalem, Jesus talks with and teaches his disciples in preparation for the future. He emphasises the importance of committing wholeheartedly to God's purposes, and focusing on what lies ahead, rather than lingering in the past. He responds to the emotional enthusiasm of three potential disciples very stridently, stressing the priority of loyalty to him and the impossibility of going back. The ploughing metaphor is a vivid illustration (v.62) – if you look back, the furrow wiggles.

He is fully aware of the cost of discipleship, asking for absolute commitment from those who want to follow him. For many, this makes for a difficult decision as they have plenty of other priorities and distractions. This is illustrated in three short encounters. Whether actual events or brief parables, Jesus is almost brutally stark and uncompromising in his demands. He warns the first person that discipleship means becoming homeless. To the second, he suggests that discipleship is more important than fulfilling family duties, even in bereavement – which even today many will find shocking. To the third, he indicates that the commitment of a disciple is so urgent that there isn't even time to say goodbye to his family.

Here following Jesus seems to override family loyalty and duties, quite clearly, there is a cost involved. It takes courage and commitment. Jesus' demonstrates unwavering commitment to

Reflection: Luke 9: 57 – 62 Linda E Hunter

his mission, communicating a sense of urgency, encouraging his disciples to forgo everyday tasks in favour of the tasks of the kingdom of God.

What are we to make of these demands in today's world?

What are the realities of discipleship today? Is Jesus' world so different from ours that what he says must be taken with a pinch of salt? Or does he say now as he did then, 'Wake up to reality'?

Christian faith is not about filling a hole in our lives, but involves the whole of our lives. It is important that God is part of whatever we do whenever, where ever. We are all called to serve God, each in our own way, each within the limitations that we have.

Following Jesus, living a life of service, does not necessarily mean doing new things or extra things it means a different way of seeing the ordinary things. It means that our daily work becomes something which is offered up to God. Our work in the community or for a charity is an expression of Christian service, offered to God and to others. Caring for a neighbour, looking after grandchildren, listening to someone, befriending a stranger all these are aspects of Christian service. As we continue to grow in our Christian lives – and we do whatever our age, as we worship, as we pray, so our lives change.

All of my life I have been blessed by people who have inspired and nurtured me in my Christian faith. Christians who have shared their faith and discipleship, and that, is what has encouraged me to try and do the same. First as a teacher in a school, supporting and encouraging the children in my care to learn more about Jesus and to develop their own personal faith, and now, as a priest.

I am sure you too have many people who have influenced you. That is what we are about as Christians, that is our vocation – to share that great of love of God that motivates and inspires , to encourage others to be followers of Jesus too.

Jesus said that he came to serve not to be served, may we too make these words our own.

Reflection: Luke 9: 57 – 62 Linda E Hunter