

**Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)**

**Luke 9: 51-62**

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. Today, we will continue reading Luke chapter 9, verses 51 to 62.

**Verse 51: "Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem."**

After Jesus came down from the Mount of Transfiguration, He began to set His face like flint toward Jerusalem, because He knew that the time had come and that He had entered the final six months of the last stage of His ministry. He had to go to Jerusalem. There, He would suffer persecution, He would be examined, and ultimately, He would walk the path of the cross.

**Verses 52–53: "and sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him. But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem."**

Geographically, the closest route from Galilee to Jerusalem was through Samaria. But when the kingdom of Israel fell, the Assyrian Empire deported many Israelites to other countries, and many Gentiles were moved into that region; thus Samaria became a place where Gentiles and Israelites lived together. The Jews regarded Gentiles as unclean, and therefore they despised the Samaritans. Likewise, the Samaritans were unwilling to receive the Jews, especially those who were on their way to Jerusalem.

In the time of Jesus, most Jews traveling from Galilee to Jerusalem would likely avoid passing through Samaria; instead, they would go eastward and travel down

along the Jordan River. Yet Jesus was willing to pass through Samaria, because in the middle period of His ministry He had once passed through Samaria and had saved a Samaritan woman there; therefore His disciples should not have been unfamiliar with Samaria. However, this time the Samaritans did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem.

**Verse 54: “And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, ‘Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?’”**

In 1 Kings chapter 18, Elijah contended with the 450 prophets of Baal. Elijah prayed, and fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt sacrifice, the wood, and the stones, so that the people struck down the prophets of Baal. When John saw that the Samaritans were unwilling to receive them, he said, Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?

**Verse 55: “But He turned and rebuked them, and said, ‘You do not know what manner of spirit you are of.’”**

Here the word “” refers to what manner of “spirit” you are of—you do not know.

**Verse 56a: “For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them.”**

The word lives here in the original means “soul,” psuche. In other words, what Jesus said here may be expressed this way: You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. The Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s souls but to save men’s souls.

In the Old Testament, in order to preserve the purity of the Israelites, God commanded them to be separated from the Gentiles, so that the coming Messiah,

Jesus Christ, might be brought forth from among the Israelites. Because of this teaching of separation from the Gentiles, the Israelites became God's chosen people, but it also caused them to look down on others, especially the Samaritans, for that region was a mixed place with many intermingled bloodlines. In John's intense anger, when the Samaritans would not receive them, he hoped that fire from heaven would burn them all up.

Jesus immediately rebuked John, saying, You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. God loves all people, including the Samaritans; their souls are all precious. The soul represents a person—their thoughts, their emotions, their will. Every one whom God has created, God treasures.

In Acts 1:8, before Jesus ascended into heaven, He said to His disciples: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." God specifically pointed out Samaria, saying that His disciples would be sent to Samaria to bring salvation particularly to the Samaritans. This was indeed carried out through Philip the evangelist in Acts chapter 8: Philip went to the region of Samaria and preached the gospel of God, leading many to salvation. Then the church in Jerusalem sent Peter and John, who went through the villages of Samaria, leading the Samaritans to believe and be saved.

Here in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus' rebuke of John also planted in advance the future sending of Peter and John to save the Samaritans. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.

**Verse 56b: "And they went to another village."**

In the later stage of Jesus' ministry, as He led His disciples, He set before them a very good example: when people receive you, you preach the gospel; when people reject you, you turn to another village and wait for a suitable time in the future, when you may return again to preach the gospel to that place.

**Verse 57: “Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, that someone said to Him, ‘Lord, I will follow You wherever You go.’”**

As Jesus led His disciples, healing the sick, casting out demons, preaching the word, and helping many people, some who saw this greatly admired Him and were willing to come and follow the Lord.

**Verse 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.’”**

Jesus clearly told this person who desired to follow Him, My path is the path of the cross; My path is a narrow way. I am now setting My face toward Jerusalem to suffer there. Therefore, foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head. On this narrow path you will suffer, to the extent that you may even be worse off than foxes and birds, for they still have a place of rest, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head. To the Christian who is eager and full of zeal to follow the Lord, Jesus says, You must carefully count the cost. This is a narrow way of the cross—are you willing to follow?

**Verses 59–60: “Then He said to another, ‘Follow Me.’ But he said, ‘Lord, let me first go and bury my father.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God.’”**

For those who desire to follow the Lord, the Lord asks them first to count the cost. Yet God Himself personally calls certain people. When the one whom He called said, Lord, let me first go and bury my father, this was a commonly used expression at that time. It did not mean that his father had already died and needed burial, as if to say, give me several days to bury my father and then I will follow You. That was not the meaning. Rather, it meant that his father was still alive. It was similar to the saying that while one’s parents are living, one should not travel far. In other words, there were still responsibilities at home; his parents were still alive, and therefore

he could not follow at that time. After they had passed away, after he had buried them and fulfilled his duties, then he would follow.

Jesus' answer was very direct. He said, Let the dead bury their own dead. In God's view, those who do not have God's eternal life are in fact dead; it is only a matter of time. Our human life on earth is so brief; when the time comes, it passes away. Although a person may still appear active now, from the perspective of eternity he is dead. Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is a word of life, a word that imparts eternal life. It is to sow the seed of life among those who are dying, so that they may receive eternal life and not perish.

**Verse 61: "And another also said, 'Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house.'"**

This was also one who had been called by God, but he could not immediately respond to that call. He wanted to bid farewell to those at home. It was not that he could not follow; rather, he was delaying his following. There were certain courtesies and obligations he felt he had not yet fulfilled, and so he said, let me first bid farewell to my family.

**Verse 62: "But Jesus said to him, 'No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.'"**

Here Jesus' requirement is very strict. The plow represents the service entrusted to you by God. God's commission is already in your hand; your hand is already on the plow, yet you look back. A person who puts his hand to the plow and looks back cannot properly fulfill his service to God. Therefore He says that the one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is not fit for the kingdom of God. To respond to God's call requires one hundred percent focus on Jesus, no longer allowing the

affairs of the world to entangle you. Thus, the one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is not fit for the kingdom of God.

In this final section, three kinds of followers are described. If you yourself desire to follow the Lord, God asks you to carefully count the cost of following Him. And when God calls you to follow, that call has priority over your responsibilities—over family responsibilities and work responsibilities. Here God’s meaning is not that you should neglect your family, but that you must place God’s call first in your order of priorities. When Jesus was on the cross, He even entrusted His mother Mary to His disciple John; Jesus made good provision for His mother. Therefore, His meaning here is not that you should not care for your family, but that in your order of priorities, God’s call must come first.

Once you accept God’s call and begin the work God has entrusted to you, you must no longer put your hand to the plow and look back. You must wholeheartedly and resolutely complete your commission. This also reveals that in following the Lord, each of us passes through three different stages. At the beginning, you admire a good work and desire to follow the Lord; the Lord says you must first sit down and count the cost, for this is a narrow way of the cross. Once you have counted the cost and continue to follow, God then calls you. Once God calls you, that call must take first place. You cannot use your family responsibilities, work responsibilities, or social responsibilities to refuse such a call. Once you accept the call and begin God’s commission upon you, you must wholeheartedly and resolutely keep your hand on the plow, no longer looking back; only then can you enter the kingdom of God.

Let us pray together: Lord, help us. You know the condition of our lives, and You know where each one of us is now. Help us to desire a good work and to place ourselves in Your hands. At the proper time, let our lives grow, and make us willing to respond to Your call, and even more willing to wholeheartedly complete the commission You have entrusted to us. Bless my life, and let me fully experience Your grace in my daily living. Thank You. I pray in the holy name of Jesus Christ. Amen.