

Grace and Peace from God our Father and our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Life has a way of presenting us with choices – ultimatums if you will – about where exactly our lives will go or be lived. Our texts from Holy Scripture this morning focus on such choices and what sort of person we want to be.

The thing about these moments of decision is that we don't usually get to choose when we will be faced with them, and they don't typically come when we're expecting them. Elisha is out plowing a field when from out of nowhere – and with no warning to him – the prophet Elijah throws his mantle over Elisha's shoulder, and he faces the decision – ***will my life go on as I envision it or will I live out God's vocation for my life.***

The young Elisha most likely already has an idea where in his mind's eye he expects his life to go, but Elijah's mantle presents him with an alternative – a different vision for his life, if you will. He immediately abandons his plowing, and runs after the great prophet Elijah. For Elisha the decision to follow God's call seems to come easily. Nevertheless, recognizing the life changing implications of the choice facing him, Elisha makes a single request – *“Let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you.”*

The weary Elijah, aware of the demands this path will require of him, tells him, *“Go back again; for what have I done to you?”*

Jesus – for His part – chooses quite deliberately to turn towards Jerusalem and the cross that waits for Him there. Jesus confronts a Samaritan village with a call to follow in the path of the Kingdom of

God, but they do not receive Him.

How many times do you recall Jesus entering a village and not being received?

Aside from His own hometown of Nazareth, I cannot recall another such occurrence. Their decision reminds us that following God's call and vision for our lives and the world is never a foregone conclusion. The people of that village do not desire to be altered from whatever path they have chosen for themselves – a decision that seems unlikely when confronted with the Jesus of Nazareth. But let's be fair. Jesus confronts us daily, hourly, with choices for or against God's vision for our life and that of the world, and most often the voice of the world and our own thoughts drown it out.

Their choice clearly bothers Jesus' disciples. Perhaps we don't see it as such, but the disciples face the same choice whether they will follow God's call and vision, and they also do not desire to be altered from the path of their own will, and they want to punish those who choose differently than them, but Jesus rebukes them. Besides, the choice not to embrace God's vision comes with its own punishment a – living only in a world solely of human design and vision; how sad.

How often every day do we face the choice between our own selfish, willful, self-obsessed path and the opportunity to exercise the compassion, mercy, generosity and kindness of God's call?

How many times do we pass a homeless person, and not only ignore their plea for help, but also judge them in our hearts? When the truth is, there but for the grace of God go I.

How often do we realize that injustice faces another, or a another gender, or an entire race, and choose not to speak up or advocate for them or call you state and federal representative, preferring instead not to get involved?

How often in a single day are we confronted with the catastrophic results of global warming caused by our carbon wasteful lifestyles, and ignore the needs of God's creation and future generations without so such as thought?

How often this week did you blithely listen to someone talking about someone else – gossiping, assassinating their character – and first did not stop them, second did not reprove them, third didn't defend them, or fourth, worse yet, repeated the same unverified information without speaking to the person in question?

How many times yesterday were you made aware of the needs of another person, and simply ignored it?

Jesus' greatest commandment – *love God with all your heart and mind and strength and self and your neighbor as yourself* – **confronts us every moment of everyday**, but we're so practiced at leaving such ideas to Sunday that it doesn't even register, the hundred times a day when it applies.

It's not surprising that Jesus has no time for the next fellow who likes the idea of following Jesus, but doesn't seem to understand that following Jesus requires putting everything else second – home, family, security, even our own opinions (definitely them).

I'm not judging you because I'm no better than you. We've become so enamored of American entitlement that we've exchanged the gospel

for it. We've exchanged Jesus' vision of the Kingdom of God for a corrupted version of the American dream, where I am entitled to and get everything "I" want, now, and everyone else can worry about their own.

We're here to be reminded this morning that such is not God's vision for human life or the Kingdom of God. God's call demands that we sacrifice our own desires so that everyone can have what they need; so that everyone can live with dignity; so that everyone can know those live under the power of the Holy Spirit and know the gifts Paul speaks about: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Furthermore, we need reminding that of the real American dream: *We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.*

Jesus confronts us with this week about where exactly our lives are going, how they will be lived, and who and what we serve. Will we live for ourselves, or for God and the world?

I'm not saying that Jesus doesn't love you if you no matter what. Jesus willingly died for us regardless of what we are willing to do for God. But it seems pretty clear in Luke 9 that Jesus has got no time for people who just like the idea of God's kingdom, or people who are half committed to God's justice, or people who put it after their other commitments.

When we are tempted to think that God has abandoned the Church, we should remember Luke 9, and be reminded how Jesus doesn't seem to

have time for people who don't put the Kingdom of God before all else. Besides, the Church is growing like gangbusters everywhere except where western people live in affluence.

If we are tempted to think that these words do not apply to us, I will hold us to the standard Jesus raises this morning: *“as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”*

Do we? Are we? But most importantly, Will we?

Amen!!!