**JESUS RESOLUTELY SET OUT FOR JERUSALEM**

Luke 9:37:62

Key Verse

I don’t know about you, but I’m not always the best with directions. I forget a lot where streets are, and rely heavily on my iPhone to get me to where I need to go. I’m the same with figuring out my life; I tend to not really know where to go or what to do next. So, I just kind of go with it. Do you find it difficult to know which way to go in life? My dad used to describe driving around as a boy in the backseat with his grandparents his parents in the front, and how everyone in the car would tell the his dad where to go—“Go dis way!” No, dis way. No, no! Go, dat way.” That’s how my life feels sometimes—a car of different voices telling me where to go. So, I sometimes imagine—wouldn’t it be nice to have a Siri for life’s decisions? We could press a button, ask “Which way should I go now?” and have a nice little map appear, with detailed instructions.

Today, we follow Jesus on a journey. A lot of things happen, and people want him to do things, go places, but Jesus knows exactly where he’s going, and how he’s getting there. And what’s more, not only does Jesus know where he’s going, but there’s something driving him to get there. So today, we want to learn from Jesus, asking the question, “What should be guiding my life?”

**“How long shall I stay here?” (37-43b)**

Last week we heard about a rather amazing event--Jesus went up on a mountain with his top three disciples. On the mountain, he was transfigured into something so brilliant and magnificent that it was as if his clothes were like flashes of lightening. On the mountain, Jesus was talking with Elijah and Moses, and a cloud came around them, and the voice of God himself spoke and said, “This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him” (35). Essentially, these top three disciples saw something no one had ever seen before—Jesus in his form as God and the unseen God saying who Jesus was, and telling them to listen to him. Imagine that.

After all of this happened, Jesus and the three came down from the mountain. And that's where we begin today's passage. Let's look at verse 37-40. There was a large crowd waiting for him. Look at verse 38. A man was there who begged Jesus to look at his son, because his son was not well. In verses 39-40, the father describes to Jesus what happens to his son--he tells Jesus that a spirit seizes him, causes him to scream, throws him down to the ground it what seems like epileptic fits with him foaming at the mouth, and the father says that when this happens, the spirit scarcely leaves him and is destroying him. How horrible. The father tells Jesus in verse 41, that he had already begged his disciples to heal his son, but they couldn't.  
  
How does Jesus respond to the father? Look at verse 41. "You unbelieving and perverse generation… how long shall I stay here and put up with you? Bring your son here." Geez. That seems a little harsh, right? Why did Jesus respond to the man like this?  
  
Look at the contrast of what had just happened. Jesus had been up on a mountain where he had been transformed into his heavenly self. Then coming down, he sees the crowd who were very confused about who he was (19). He came down to a demon-possessed boy, to a desperate father. And Jesus came down to the rest of his disciples who, although had no problem when they were sent out in pairs casting out evil spirits (1,6), now none of them could cast this spirit out of this boy. So Jesus says, “You unbelieving and perverse generation.” Jesus addresses the entire generation as being unbelieving and perverse. It was like he was agonizing at how far away spiritually people were from God at the foot of the mountain, how different things were from where he had just come.

How would you react to all of that at the bottom of that mountain? All of that chaos? How would you know what to do next? A while ago though, when there used to be no Siri, no GPS, no compasses, finding out where you needed to go was a lot different. Especially for sailors at sea at night, knowing where you were and where you had to go was sometimes very hard—it’s dark and overcast, it’s stormy, it’s rainy, there are no major landmarks or street names, just you and water in ever direction. How did they know which way to go? They would search for and find the North Star, which can be seen even when the moon couldn’t. And when sailors knew due north, they would gauge from there where they needed to go.

Look again at verse 41. Jesus asks, “[H]ow long shall I stay here and put up with you?” This question of Jesus at first sounds like he’s annoyed and is giving up. But Jesus here is looking up towards his “North Star.” He would be leaving soon. There would be a time where things would be different—a solution to this unbelief, perversion, ulterior motives, fear, a complete lack of self-control, confusion. He could stay here and try to deal with the immediate issues at hand. But he looked instead forward to where he needed to go.

It’s very easy to react to or get lost in our situations in life. The demands and pressures and just general dysfunction around us become sort of disorienting. And we can live in a sort of reactionary way—reacting to one situation after another, and just sort of going with the push and pull of these things. But we can learn from Jesus here that it’s important to rise above all of this and have a sense of where we should be going. But how do we know exactly where we should be going? What is our guiding “North Star?”

**The Least (42-50)**

Before we answer that question, let’s look at verses 42-43a. The son is brought to Jesus, but in that moment is thrown into a fit by the spirit. Pretty intense. But Jesus simply rebukes the spirit, gives the son back to his father. And everyone was amazed, it says, at the greatness of God and was marveling at what Jesus did. But Jesus isn’t really fazed or wants to dwell on peoples’ reactions or by what was happening at all. Let’s now look at 43b and 44. Instead, he addresses his disciples and tells them to “listen carefully,” saying, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men.” Again, here, we see Jesus looking forward, and sharing with his disciples what he was looking towards—a time when he would be handed over into the hands of men. Now that's some information. If someone said "Hey, listen carefully" and then says essentially, "So guys, I’m going to be handed over to men." That’s pretty unusual, and sounds sort of menacing. Wouldn’t you ask a follow-up question—“Jesus, what do you mean? What’s going to happen to you?” But look at how the disciples respond in verse 45. They didn't listen carefully, they didn’t understand it, and it seems they didn't want to. It says they were afraid to ask any questions about what Jesus meant. Instead, there was something else occupying their minds. In verse 45, it says that they were arguing among themselves about who would be the greatest. Isn't that crazy? They were more concerned about who was the greatest. Are you serious?  
  
It seems that this "greatest" thing had probably been developing among the disciples for a while. After being sent out two by two to share about the gospel and heal people, they got back together and shared stories about what happened, and it may have seemed that other pairs of disciple had done more on their journey than others. When Jesus asked all of his disciples who they thought he was, and after Peter responded correctly, some of the disciple must've felt jealous. And after singling out the "top three" to go up on the mountain with him, and left the rest below, it's not far to think that the disciples who couldn't heal the boy were being compared to the select three who could go up the mountain. They all wanted to be greatest.

When talking about a driving force to direct out lives—being “great” is definitely a big driving force for us. We all want some sort of achievement in life, for our lives to mean something, for us to do something great. So, if we’re honest, we all want to be great in what we do or who we are. And we gauge this “greatness” by comparing ourselves to others. I was reading this week about “daydreaming” and there was a study done about what people daydream the most about. And you know what it is? People daydream about their funerals. They think about how many people will come, who would come, and especially, what people will say about them when they die. There’s this driving force within us to be great, and it directs a lot of the decisions we make.

If I were Jesus, and telling his disciples something so important was going to happen to me, and instead find them arguing about who would be the greatest, I would've flipped out. But look at verse 47. It says he knew their thoughts. He takes a child and has the child stand next to him. Jesus was making a statement here. They all wanted to be second to Jesus, and wanted to know where everyone else followed suit. But Jesus put a child next to him, saying, "This is who deserves this spot next to me. This is whose the greatest." A child? What could a child do? Children are cute, but if you think about it, they’re pretty useless. They can’t do things like adults, they can’t work, they can’t contribute to society, they’re not developed yet.

Jesus explains why he put a child next to him. Let's read verse 48 together. “Then he said to them, “Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. For it is the one who is least among you all who is the greatest.”

Culturally, men then really didn’t “hang out” with kids. That was seen as the “woman’s role.” Especially spiritual men, or men of importance, like these disciples following the very popular and powerful Jesus, why welcome a little child? Children were seen really at the bottom of the totem poll of significance of that culture. But Jesus is saying welcoming a child is true greatness, because it is making yourself the “least” or “last” in line, even underneath children. To welcome a child means to say a child is greater than me or any of my significance or status. To be great is to be the least. It’s true humility.

Look again at verse 48. Jesus says that it was the least among the disciples who were the greatest. The one of them who wanted to be nothing, didn’t want any kind of greatness that was actually great.If you look at verses 49 and 50, even though Jesus had just talked about being the least, John was upset that someone who was not part of the select twelve, but was outside of the circle, was casting out demons—something only *they* were allowed to do. It was so easy for John’s desire to be “great” to cloud his thinking.

This concept of being great really can similarly cloud our thinking and how we see things, to where the concept of being the “least” doesn’t even register. But being the “least” is a complete change in identity that directs our behavior. If we’re still thinking in terms of traveling—we have due North, a direction of where to go, and being the least is sort of the mode of transportation. The way we travel is the way of being the least. A good illustration might be how we see Jesus actually travel in Luke’s Gospel to where he was headed—not on a grand horse or chariot, he rides into the capital city on a baby donkey. The we to travel—humility.

**To Jerusalem, With Resolve (51-56)**

Let’s read verse 51. “As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.” Jesus’ destination was Jerusalem. It was where he was headed. The Greek translation for “resolute” is a phrase that means, “set your face towards.” What would happen in Jerusalem? It’s where he would be handed over to the hands of men. It’s the location of his departure, which he talked about with Elijah and Moses on the mountain in front of his three disciples (31). He had told all of his disciples about what would happen in Jerusalem even earlier when he said “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life” (22). In Jerusalem, he would suffer a lot, he would be betrayed by being handed over, he would be killed, and then the extraordinary-- he would be then raised to life.

Say you could ask God for direction in life like a Magic 8 Ball—“Where should I go in my life?” What if, when you turn the ball over, you got an answer—“a place of rejection, suffering, humiliation, death.” I would shake the ball again and ask the question again. No one wants to go towards rejection, humiliation, etc. What would motivate someone to do that? What was motivating Jesus?

Look again at verse 51. Even though Jesus had talked several times with his disciples about what would happen to him, they didn’t care. No one wanted to talk about it, ask about it, or gave any attention to it, because it didn’t sound all that great. The Samaritans were upset at him for going there, his disciples were still confused and are talking about calling down fire from heaven. And suffering, betrayal, humiliation, rejection—Jesus had to do all of this by himself. And when he went through it, everyone would abandon him, he would be laughed at for doing it. But knowing all this would happen, it says he “resolutely” set out for Jerusalem. Why?

It was love. The only reason anyone would undergo so much rejection, humiliation and suffering, see themselves as the least, would be out of love for someone else. Jesus was “resolute” about Jerusalem because of his love for God. His love for God was his driving force, and no matter what, he would go through everything that was waiting for him in Jerusalem because of his love for God. God so wanted this to happen, so that he could bring us into a relationship with him. And because of Jesus’ love for God, he did what was so hard to do..

This Jerusalem, in a sense, is our North Star, our guiding destination too. Jerusalem is where it all would happen—the death and resurrection of Jesus—which is the Good News of the Gospel. As Christians, this not only becomes our own good news of salvation, and the foundation for our lives, but also what guides our lives. It guides how we make decisions. Moreover, sharing the gospel in our lives, this becomes what we live for. Living towards the Gospel as the destination of our lives is something that we all can do.

And, as with Jesus, it requires sometimes a lot of self-sacrifice, of even suffering, to live for the Gospel. And looking ahead at verses 57 and 62. Several men wanted to follow Jesus too, but he told them in succession that to follow him, to where he’s going, you have to be all in. You have to make the destination of the Gospel more important than security, than tragedies in life, than family ties.

How can we do it? We have to fall in love with God. Get to know him, like we would anyone. You know, if you love someone, you’d do anything for them, it’s not a question of amount or sacrifice, you would do anything no matter the cost. And when we do, our lives don’t become all about us, but if we’re really in love with God, we’ll live to please him. Our lives become living for him, pleasing him, and the question of cost of suffering doesn’t matter.

So a paradigm shift must happen. It’s not about, “God, help me find the way for my life?” Out of our love for him, we ask, “God, how can I give my life to you?”

Where are you going? Are we willing to allow the Gospel—with the suffering, humility and sacrifice it asks us—to be what guides our lives, our decisions, our actions? Will we give our lives to God, have him lead us?