

## Lent Week 1 — Luke 9:51–62

### *Setting His Face*

**Big Idea:** Following Jesus begins with decisive commitment, not hesitation.

**Series Anchor:** *Discipleship means moving forward with Jesus — without looking back.*

### The Moment Everything Changes

There are moments in life when you can feel the shift.

A conversation that ends differently than you expected. A diagnosis that redraws the future. A decision that closes one door so another can open.

Luke 9:51 is one of those moments—not just in Jesus’ life, but in the Gospel itself.

“When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.”

Up to this point, Jesus has been moving *around* Galilee. After this moment, He begins moving *toward* Jerusalem. And everything changes.

Lent begins right here—not with ashes, not with fasting, but with **direction**. Before Jesus asks anything of us, He shows us what commitment looks like. He *sets His face*.

### I. Jesus’ Resolve Toward Jerusalem (9:51)

Luke tells us Jesus “set his face” to go to Jerusalem. That phrase is deliberate—and heavy.

It’s not casual movement. It’s not curiosity. It’s not optimism. This language echoes the prophet Isaiah:

“I have set my face like flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame.”  
(Isaiah 50:7)

Jesus knows exactly what Jerusalem represents:

- Confrontation with religious power

- Betrayal by a friend
- Mockery, violence, death

And still—He goes.

This is not Jesus being dragged toward suffering. This is Jesus *choosing obedience*.

This is why Scripture speaks so often about *choice* when it comes to faith. Not because grace is earned, but because grace must be received.

Many people assume they are Christians because of what they check on a form, or because they grew up around church, or because faith has always been part of their family story. But following Jesus has never been inherited by proximity. It is always entered by decision.

This moment in Luke’s Gospel sets the trajectory for everything the apostle Paul will later proclaim about the good news: salvation is not something we drift into. Just as Jesus sets His face toward Jerusalem, we are called to set our faces toward the cross and toward the kingdom of God.

And Jesus knows exactly what awaits Him there.

That matters—because we also know that choosing life in Christ is not a cost-free decision. Obedience may lead us through seasons of loss, frustration, sickness, or grief—through what the psalmist calls “the valley of the shadow of death.” Yet choosing Christ is never accidental. It is purposeful. Specific. Intentional.

You do not meander into salvation. You step into it—trusting the One who has already gone before you.

And Luke reminds us of that here: Jesus does not wander toward the cross. He walks toward it. And in doing so, He invites us to choose whether we will follow.

**Important Lenten truth:**

And Lent begins by asking us a difficult question:

Do we actually know where Jesus is going?

Because following Jesus only sounds appealing if we imagine He's headed toward comfort, success, or affirmation.

But Luke is honest: Jesus is headed toward costly love.

## **II. Rejection Along the Way (9:52–56)**

Almost immediately, the resolve of Jesus meets resistance.

He sends messengers into a Samaritan village—but they refuse Him. They reject him. Why? “Because his face was set toward Jerusalem.”

This rejection isn't random. It's theological and political and historical.

Samaritans and Jews share a long history of division, distrust, and wounded pride. Jerusalem is not neutral ground.

And here's the key: Jesus is not rejected for being vague—He is rejected for being *clear*.

James and John react the way many of us would: “Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?”

They want power. They want vindication. They want to *win*. Jesus rebukes them. Not because rejection doesn't hurt—but because retaliation would derail the mission.

Then Luke says something quiet, but profound:

“They went on to another village.”

Jesus absorbs rejection and keeps walking.

### **Lenten wisdom:**

Faithfulness does not guarantee acceptance. Obedience does not prevent disappointment.

Sometimes the most Christlike response is simply to keep moving forward. To quote the great philosopher, Pumba: “You've got to put your behind in the past.” Or a more modern 21<sup>st</sup> century philosopher, Dory: “Just keep swimming.”

### III. Cost of Discipleship (9:57–62)

Now the camera turns from Jesus' resolve to *our hesitation*.

Three people step forward. All three sound sincere. None of them are outright rejected.

But each one reveals how hard it is to follow Jesus *without conditions*.

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#### 1. The Cost of Comfort (9:57–58)

“I will follow you wherever you go.” It sounds wholehearted. Enthusiastic. Brave.

Jesus replies: “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.”

Jesus doesn't say, “*Don't follow me.*” He says, “*Know what you're saying.*”

Here, Jesus is defining the relationship between admiration and obedience more clearly. He wants this would-be disciple to understand what *following* actually entails. There is more to this than being inspired by Jesus or intrigued by the possibility of a religious “walkabout.”

*To follow Jesus is not simply to admire the movement—it is to share in the life that movement creates.*

This person wants the adventure of discipleship without the instability of discipleship muddying the waters. And Jesus clarifies that right away. This life costs something. It is not always comfortable or predictable.

When you read through the New Testament, you don't find a church settled in ease. You find a community shaped by struggle—often on the fringes, frequently misunderstood, sometimes ostracized. These early believers are not insiders to power; they are outsiders. And the Roman Empire is not indifferent to them—it is actively trying to erase them.

This is not a pleasant stroll along the Jordan River valley.

This is a road that will require trust, endurance, and surrender.

It's the difference between admiring a marathon runner and training for the race. One looks inspiring. The other changes your schedule, diet, and priorities.

**Lenten question:**

What comforts—physical, emotional, spiritual—am I unwilling to risk in order to follow Christ?

**2. The Delay of Duty (9:59–60)**

Jesus calls the second person directly: “Follow me.”

The response sounds reasonable: “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.”

This isn't about ignoring family responsibility. In that culture, this phrase often implied waiting until obligations were fully resolved—possibly years.

The key phrase is “*Let me first.*”

Jesus responds sharply: “Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”

Jesus is not devaluing family. He is confronting **delay disguised as devotion.**

**Lenten insight:**

The most dangerous word in discipleship is *later*. Lent exposes how easily we postpone obedience while convincing ourselves we're being responsible.

**3. The Pull of the Past (9:61–62)**

The third person says: “I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home.” Again—reasonable. Polite. Human.

Jesus answers: “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.” This is agricultural imagery. If you look back while plowing, the field becomes crooked.

Jesus is not condemning memory. He's warning against **longing.**

Looking back here means wanting your old life while trying to move into a new one.

You cannot drive forward safely while staring in the rearview mirror. At some point, what's behind you will cause you to make a mess of what's ahead.

**Lenten mirror:**

What past version of myself do I keep revisiting for security or identity?

**IV. Bringing It All Together: Lent as a Forward Journey**

Luke 9:51–62 is not about trying harder. It's about *direction*.

Jesus sets His face forward. He endures rejection. He refuses half-hearted following. Lent begins by stripping away the illusion that discipleship can be casual.

Not because Jesus is harsh—but because the road ahead is real.

**Series Anchor:**

*Discipleship means moving forward with Jesus — without looking back.*

**Invitation**

This morning, we begin with a question before obedience becomes a practice: Are we willing to follow Jesus where He is actually going?

Not just when it's inspiring. Not just when it fits our timeline. Not just when it protects our comfort. But forward. With clarity. With resolve.

Because the One who set His face toward Jerusalem now invites us to walk the same road— not perfectly, but honestly. And life begins right there.

**Let's pray together.**