



SERMON REFLECTION GUIDE

Luke, Part 33: Jesus Sets His Face - Luke 9:51-62 - July 6, 2025

SERMON OUTLINE

Intro - Stephen King's *The Dark Tower* & JRR Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* series as mirror image stories about a hero on an epic quest to a dark place to save the world.

All the best stories are reflections of the greatest story.

Luke 9:51 is acknowledged by most scholars as the HINGE verse of the gospel.

Jesus turns from ministry in Galilee towards Jerusalem and the cross that awaits him.

I. Jesus' Face is Set (Luke 9:51-56)

Jesus nears the time "for him to be taken up", i.e., his death, burial, resurrection, ascension.

This will happen in Jerusalem - and Luke shows us Jesus' steely resolve with the 3x repetition:

- he set *his face* (v. 51), before *his face* (v. 52), *his face* was set (v. 53)

His path is decisive enough that it takes him through *Samaria* - a place that Jews often chose travel around, rather than through.

The Samaritans resembled *Mormons* in a lot of ways - an offshoot of Judaism that departed far enough to be something else entirely - new temple, new Torah, new priesthood, etc.

Presumably, the Samaritans might have received Jesus had he been willing to ascribe to their culture and religion.

But, they reject him because he is going to Jerusalem - a sign that he will not be going along with the Samaritan way of life.

Application: Do we want to follow Jesus? Or do we want Jesus to follow us and endorse what we are already doing?

The disciples knee-jerk reaction (v. 54) is to call fire down from heaven like Elijah in the OT.

Jesus' rebuke of the disciples for their graceless wrath reveals just what his path means: "*You want my enemies to suffer, but I'm going to Jerusalem to suffer FOR my enemies.*"

II. Is Yours? (Luke 9:57-62)

Three quick interactions with potential followers led to *near-proverbial retorts* from Jesus at their lack of understanding of what it means to follow him on the path he is traveling.

The first statement is very gung-ho - "I will follow you wherever you go" (v. 57)

Jesus wants this guy (and us!) to know - following me isn't comfortable. Those that follow him will begin to sense that this world is not their home.

The next two give away their *priorities*—"Let me first..." (v. 59, 61)

- Given Jewish tradition, it is likely that the man's father is not dead or even dying or he would not be talking to Jesus in the first place. Jesus says that the living must serve the living - and that he should begin proclaiming the kingdom of God. (v. 60)

- The second person asks a similar question as Elisha asks Elijah - Can I say goodbye to my family before I begin my ministry? Elijah says yes, and *Elisha burns his plow and sacrifices his oxen* in a powerful symbol that his old way of life is over. (1 Kgs. 19:21)

- Jesus knows this and responds with a plow parable of his own: "*No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.*" (Lk. 9:62)

Today is all we really have. *Tomorrow* lasts forever and *someday* never arrives.

Illustration: Plowing a in a straight line in the days before GPS. The moment you look back to check your progress is the moment you go off track.

Luke does not resolve these interactions for us. We do not know the outcomes of these peoples' lives. We can only apply the principles to our own lives and faith journeys.

Personal - marriage and church as examples of how I strive to keep my eye on the prize.



SERMON REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What are some other stories that are either obvious or indirect reduplications of the biblical story of Jesus Christ?
2. Why is Luke 9:51 considered a pivotal verse in Luke's gospel? What does it mean that Jesus' "face was set"?
3. Why do the Samaritans reject Jesus? How are we tempted to treat Jesus in the same way as the Samaritans?
4. Why does Jesus seemingly pour cold water on the first person's proclamation that he will follow Jesus?
5. What do the second and third person reveal about their commitment with the word "first"?
6. Why doesn't Luke tell us what happened with the three people in v. 57-62?