

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message

February 1, 2026. "Prepping for the trip: where do you want to go?"

I Intro.

We're plowing through winter, waiting for spring. We hope you're having a good year so far. You'll want to keep up with everything that's happening at NCC. Stay connected through our social media to keep up with everything that's going on. Welcome to our companion devotional to Sunday's message. It's just a part of all we have to offer to you. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing. We hope you find this tool helpful on your spiritual journey. We don't want you to miss out on anything. We consider you part of our community. We have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all those through our website, app, and social media sites. Our app is the best way to livestream our services, but you can also livestream on FaceBook and YouTube. You can revisit past services, sign up for events and even give. We're encouraged by your presence when you gather with us. New and familiar faces join us every Sunday. If you join us online, we appreciate your presence. We are fully committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family, and if there is anything you need, prayer, or anything else, please let us know.

II Sunday.

We're starting a new series, so finally some answerable questions. And fun ones too.

What's the most memorable trip you ever took? Not necessarily a vacation, but just some kind of trip? What made that trip memorable? What did you have to do to prepare for that trip?

Now think about this last question. **What did you have to do to prepare for that trip?**

1. Choose a destination.
2. Decide what NOT to take.
3. Decide what TO take.
4. And then actually leave on the trip.

Why are we doing this series? We're just a few weeks from Ash Wednesday. Our Lenten journey towards Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday. This is similar to what Advent did to prepare us for Christmas. Lent helps us prepare ourselves mentally, spiritually to get in the mindset for that spiritual journey. So, we're finding truths from the specific work of going on a journey to help us do the work of Lent. Our first emphasis is, choosing and committing to a destination. In this context of a personal spiritual journey it's asking; "**Who do you want to be?**"

We're going to use two primary teaching passages for this. Because there seem to be two elements and truths about a trip. Both an actual trip, and a spiritual one.

1. Pick a destination, and then fully commit to that destination. Once you decide who you want to become, it's crafting, and cultivating a life in that direction.

2. The process of committing to that destination is making sure you're going to be able to do the things that trip will require. If you sincerely have an idea of who you want to become, **are you up for the work to do it?** No one has casually or accidentally 'drifted' to a planned vacation, or spiritually to become the person you want to be. Choosing a destination (who you want to be) and committing to the work (counting the cost) to get there, is a profoundly intentional process.

Let's go over each of these two elements of a spiritual journey.

1. Choosing a destination means making a resolute commitment to that destination. The very first step in the process of going on a trip is deciding; **Where do you want to go?** Picking a place, a destination, can be a challenge. A destination will reflect what you want from that trip, and what you want to happen. A trip requires you to ask; **“What do I want to experience?” “What am I looking for?”** Do I want; a big city, beach, mountains, family adventure, a new and different place. The same questions have to be asked when you think about your spiritual life, and your relationship with God. **“What do I want to experience with God?” “What am I looking for?”** **“Who am I hoping to become on this journey?”**

Answering those questions wisely and well, will help you begin to do the work of deciding what you want your spiritual journey to look like and be. The real work comes from fashioning your life, narrowing your focus, and doing the proper preparation and effort, committing to that destination. When you choose a destination, you've answered those questions about what you're looking for, and what you want to happen, on your trip/journey. Then it's allowing that destination to speak into, and inform, what you will be doing next to prepare for that trip/journey.

What did it look like for Jesus to make this destination decision?

Luke 9:51-53. When the days drew near for him to be received up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him; but the people would not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem.

This is a powerful description of someone who has chosen the path of their life. You've seen this in movies. It's that person who knows what the path of their life will look like, has accepted what will come with it, and then you see this gritty, steely determination towards that direction. Movies like; *“Rocky”*. *“Good Will Hunting”*. Even *“Legally Blond”* and *“Everything, Everywhere, All at Once”*. The main characters now know everything in their life is pointing them to commit themselves fully towards that destination. When your face is set, you're locked into your destination— fully committed. This is a declaration of purpose; *“THIS is what I want my life to be about!”*

We see it in **Isaiah 50:7— “Therefore I have set my face like a stone, determined to do his will.”**

There is clarity for yourself, where you are headed. Other people will see it too. Warning: it can be somewhat of a dividing commitment too. People will have no doubt about what you want your life to be about. And you may see cracks in their commitment to who you want to become. In **John 6**. Jesus said his followers must; *“eat my flesh and drink my blood”*. And at that point crowds left him. Jesus discovered *“setting your face”* is a ‘thinner outer’. There will be something about you, the depth of your commitment to your destination, that communicates, what your priorities are— what's important to you. When you commit to a particular trip, then everything you do in preparation was specifically for that trip. That's what *“setting your face”* does. Your life will be radically different.

Where are you headed? ? Where do you want to go?

Are you willing to “set your face” towards that?

2. Choosing and committing to a destination means counting the cost. Choosing the destination, and *“setting your face”* is one thing. Now your trip will require the next step, and question. **After you choose your destination, after you “set your face” towards that destination, do you know what that trip will require?**

Making sure you're willing to do the things the trip will require, demand of you.

What did Jesus tell us, warn us about, in committing to a journey and destination?

Jesus warned us that we better make sure it's what we really wanted to do. This passage is going to sound really harsh, so I want to give it context. This is not a "do this or else" passage. This is a Yoda passage; "Do or do not. There is no try." You can't do this just half...way. If this is the life you want. If this is the direction you want to go. You have to know what it's going to involve. You're making a personal commitment that's going to force you to make a, 'cost-benefit analysis'. There will be a trade off of what you will have to give up to do the things to make this trip work.

When you commit to a destination, the direction you want to go, you know you have to follow through on the things that will get you there. Committing to that destination automatically committing you to a specific work. So, make sure this is really what you want to do before you do it. I've been sky diving. There was no turning back when I was strapped to my partner, and at 14,000 feet. I had to jump.

Hear the words of Jesus.

Luke 14:25-33 *A large crowd was following Jesus. He turned around and said to them, "If you want to be my disciple, you must, by comparison, hate everyone else—your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple. And if you do not carry your own cross and follow me, you cannot be my disciple. "But don't begin until you count the cost. For who would begin construction of a building without first calculating the cost to see if there is enough money to finish it? Otherwise, you might complete only the foundation before running out of money, and then everyone would laugh at you. They would say, 'There's the person who started that building and couldn't afford to finish it!' "Or what king would go to war against another king without first sitting down with his counselors to discuss whether his army of 10,000 could defeat the 20,000 soldiers marching against him? And if he can't, he will send a delegation to discuss terms of peace while the enemy is still far away. So you cannot become my disciple without giving up everything you own.*

This is not a passage to shame you or pile the guilt on. Becoming a follower of Jesus is never about forcing you to do something you're not ready to do. The church hasn't always been good with this. We pile on the shame and guilt. The church will scare you (we still see it around today) to 'become a Christian'. That is so far from what this teaching is all about.

Jesus is saying he wants us to find salvation, freedom, new and eternal life in him. But this life is more than just saying a prayer, or asking him into your heart. This trip/journey of following Jesus, is a serious commitment. No condemnation or judgment if you're not at a place to choose this—yet. You don't have to jump out of a plane. But—if you are choosing to do that, then you need to make sure you're okay, ready, committed, to do the things that going there will require.

This is called 'counting the cost'. Or 'predeciding'. It's knowing that your destination will change what your life will look like. Doing the work of creating the elements it would take to go where you want to go. IF you want to live this way, to "set your face", then you have to 'predecide' who you are before you move forward. So, when you come to those crossroads in life. "Should I go this way or that way?" There won't be any agonizing over which way you should go. You've already 'predecided', "set your face". The wiser path will be very apparent to you. Who to be in relationship with, who your friends will be, how you will handle material possession, your time, all of your resources. You will have to say some "no's" along the way. Saying "no" to the things that don't move you towards your destination, will give you everything you need to say "yes" to the important things. The things that matter. In

counting the cost beforehand, you won't freak out when you are faced with whether something fits into your spiritual journey. You've already aligned yourself with the wiser things.

So— where do you want to go?

Are you willing to do the hard things in order to get there?

III Challenge.

This is the first step on your trip. A lifetime journey. When Jesus “*set his face*” towards Jerusalem, it was more than just a physical location. It was a commitment to what that destination meant, and what it would cost to get there. This is drawing the trajectory of your life. It's beginning to do what we've talked about before. It's making sure you're living an integrated life. The things you want on the outside, what you want your life to look like, are matched up with the things you're doing on the inside. “*Setting your face*” isn't about gritting life out. It's about trusting in a God who wants this life for us, and following in his ways.

And this account of Jesus happened in Luke 9. There are 24 chapters in Luke. **You know what that means? Jesus' destination was always on his mind as he lived life.** Everything he did, everything he taught, all of his ministry, was done within the mindset that he was working towards this one thing.

Getting to Jerusalem. That's what “***set your face***” means.

So— you already know what your next questions are.

What is your Jerusalem? What is your destination? Where are you headed?

And

Are you willing to do the things you need to do to get there?

This is the first part of this journey. This is a fantastic life— expect an incredible amazing journey. But there will be bumps, challenges, some detours, and setbacks. This is not a continual ‘up and to the right’ journey. None of us get this perfect, make all the wiser choices. Sometimes we find ourselves in Laodicea. (Look it up. Rev. 3). Because none of us are perfect, we live bathed in grace, and forgiveness, helping each other get back on path.

When you get to your destination, being able to look back and not regret all you did to get there. Who you will become will be worth all the work you put into it.

Begin today deciding where you want to go, or maybe it's simply recommitting to that journey. Do some prep work deciding what you need to do to succeed on that trip. Counting the cost to see if you're willing to do the things to go there. And then making the commitment to head in that direction.

“SET YOUR FACE!” Let's go!