Peace in a Troubled World
Luke 9: 46-56

With Ben
8/11/26



Some say this is the turning point of the gospel. Jesus is going to be betrayed and suffer. (v 51) Jesus set his face like flint towards Jerusalem. This is the point at which Jesus meets the moment. All that he talked about is turned into action. There is no turning back. Jesus is resolutely determined to go to Jerusalem where he will meet all that is ahead of him. Think about the crown that he will wear. The crown of thorns. Think about the scarlet robe, the lashings, the blasphemies heaped on his head, the sceptre and cruel nails, the spear tearing into his side. Jesus was contradicted, confronted, blasphemed. He is going to suffer. He has decided to go. He is resolute. He is going to Jerusalem.

One of the things we know about trauma is that people get flashbacks. Such terrible things happen that the memory of them is more vivid and more alive than the present circumstance. I see Jesus on his way to Jerusalem having flashforwards in anticipation. He is a man of flesh. Horrible, horrible, horrible things are ahead of him. Yet he moves resolutely towards the pain because something greater will come out of all that suffering.

When you are carrying a great burden and you know something bad is coming and as you walk towards it, it is on your mind and you are loaded down with care almost to the point of being overwhelmed. Jesus is already carrying the cross mentally and with tension in his body. We are so thankful to God for putting people around us when we are facing hard things. Bless God for them, they make the difference between managing or not. Jesus is with his friends and he is talking about what is ahead. But as he looks for help and understanding his disciples are arguing. It's not unreasonable to think that they are preoccupied with the thought that when Jesus is gone who will be in charge? They are trying to ring-fence their exclusive group as the spear head of the Christians against outsiders who were, amazingly, casting out demons in Jesus' name. It was the very thing they were unable to do. (v49) They are not there for Jesus. They were concerned about supper and a bed for the night. Because Jesus was going to Jerusalem the Samaritans were being inhospitable. They worshiped on Mount Gerizim not Jerusalem, where Jesus was going. Jesus had already told them to forget the mountains. The day is coming when they will worship in neither place. "Don't make a mountain out of a mountain; make a mountain out of God." (George) Be there for Jesus. Listen to him and follow him. These people were leaving Jesus to carry his burden entirely on his own. They say there is nothing worse than being alone in a crowd.

I was in the lobby of a very busy MacDonald's when a woman ordered a burger without mustard. As ordered her burger came. In the middle of this very crowded place a scream went up followed by a torrent of words you don't find in the Bible. She had what looked like a psychotic break as she threw the burger down on the counter. The problem was not the mustard. We don't know what had gone before or if she had been taught how to behave herself but she was carrying such a burden on her own that she had this very public meltdown. And yet we see Jesus while carrying so much he had no psychotic break, no terrible language, no finger pointing nor anger; he is so composed and at peace. Praise God for people who are at peace in the middle of a troubled world.

His disciples were concerned about who was going to take charge. There was no need. Jesus will always be Lord. There will never be a vacancy. He brings in a little child. It's like, "Get your priorities right, there's a future." Make the main thing the main thing. Such grace, such wisdom, such composure! Don't get so overly exercised about what others are doing in Jesus' name. Don't be silly about how other churches do things. Are they against you? Do they love and serve the Lord Jesus? 'By their fruits you shall know them.' Be discerning about some of the stuff other people get up to but know when they are for us.

The road is hard so be encouraging and be nice. Don't call down fire from Heaven because they won't open their doors to us. In the end go to another village as Jesus did. They go round the problem down another roads. The cross is still there, waiting for him. It is fixed in the cosmic history of God. What matters is Christ and him crucified! And for us to be the people of God.

We need to know the secret of how this man carried the burden of all that was to come and he was not driven to drink or having a psychotic break or exploding in rage or imploding, looking for some deep dark awful thing online to make him feel powerful for a moment. Why did he remain true to God through it all, remaining wise and patient and compassionate? "When the days drew near for him to be taken up…" (51) to Heaven! One thing about Heaven is, It's Heaven! Jesus gets to go home and be with his Father. He gets to leave all the pressures and anguish of this world and go to Heaven and sit down at his Father's right hand surrounded by the love of all the angels and the songs of all creation. They welcome, him, understand him and appreciate him for who he really is. Here there is no misunderstanding, distraction or confusion. It's home where you can just be. It's like a series of busy weeks. You get a shower every day but one day you get to run a bath, with bubbles and there is no hurry; time to yourself. It's a little touch of Heaven. Or you get to walk out into the west of Wales looking out on the mountains, with blue skies, the estuary reflecting the shing sun and the rising mist makes the hills look like purls on a necklace. The grass is green and the lambs are all bleating in the field. For seconds it is just like Heaven. Take that, put it on steroids and amplify it forever that's where your story ends up. That's where you go. You go to Heaven. You don't deserve it; you haven't earned it but that's where you end up. Praise God you can draw down on the inestimable reservoir of God's grace into your everyday life.

So when your friends are arguing instead of helping you, you can remember, "I'm going to Heaven so I guess I can help these people who are clearly distracted, and wanting to call down fire from Heaven. So let's not do that." How about the Kingdom of Heaven here on earth? "Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven." How about that!