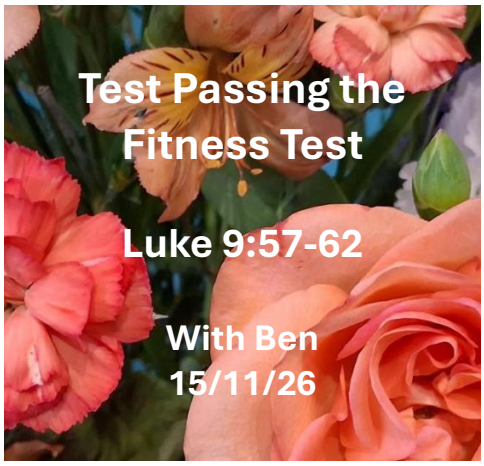

Sometimes, when reading the scriptures, it's easier to start at the end of the passage and work your way backwards from the solution through the workings. Verse 62 is about fitness. Fitness and nutrition have become big business these days. However, people are discovering no matter how physically fit they may be, they are still experiencing anxiety attacks, depression and problems of mental health. People are discovering their need of a spiritual life, so they might start to meditate and chant so they can be wholistically fit. Trying to have it all can be exhausting. In the end, what is the most important thing in life? Jesus is speaking of fitness for service in the kingdom of God. Every person's priority should be being spiritually fit above all things. So, where will you put in the time and energy? If you 'put your hand to the plough and look back, you are not fit for the service'. Will you pass the fitness test? What kind of shape are we in? Are we spiritually healthy enough to serve God in his kingdom?

Jesus invites men to follow him. Their reply is, "First let me…" There is something more important than following Jesus. He says again to another man, "Follow me" And the reply comes back, "but let me…" These seem like pretty reasonable and biblically sound requests, "I want to bury my father" "I want to say good-bye to my parents" Is Jesus being unreasonable? Trainers are not reasonable. They keep pushing you to do better and get fitter so you can serve and play your part. Jesus is being very clear about what it means to be a disciple. Trainers discipline their disciples to get them fit.

In a parallel passage in 1 Kings 19:20 Elijah calls Elisha to be his disciple. Elisha says, "Let me go and say good-bye to my parents" and Elijah says, "What have I done to you? Go and do it". It's as if Elijah's feelings are hurt. It is one thing to hurt the feelings of the prophet and quite another to hurt the feelings of the one and only God in the flesh. They were grieving the Spirit by asserting their priorities over Christ's word. "I will follow you, BUT…" Doesn't Jesus care more about that man's father or the other man's parents than the sons do? Who has the power to do something so very consequential for their eternal happiness? The grieving is the fact that if they just did what Jesus said he would make sure they would go back to their parents and say goodbye. Was the father of the man who wanted to bury him 50 and as fit as a fiddle? Or were the other man's parents so controlling that he would never be able to leave and come to Jesus? Jesus knew more about their life than they did and is worthy of our trust. Being a disciple means to trust his thinking and his ways. You can't be a Christian and not a disciple or a disciple and not a Christian. We are saved by faith. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." (Heb. 11:6) The devil believes that Jesus is the Son of God. He hates the truth. But having faith is a very different disposition. It says, "I believe who you are. I trust you, your word and your judgement. Following is all about trust. Without faith and trust it is simply impossible to please God. We are saved by grace through faith. Faith is s heart disposition. It is an assessment that says, "Can I trust all my todays and tomorrows, my family and friends, my work, to the care of this person? Can I trust my eternity, my living and my dying without saying 'But first'"? Instead of saying, "Let me." can I say, "I let you lead me, guide me, teach me, train me, use me, strengthen me, change me, save me"? Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem to do his greatest piece of work that ever has or ever will be done.

Sometimes these verses have been distorted to cultivate an indifference to family, friendship, community and children, as if the difference between following Jesus and caring for your family is like a million miles apart. It can leave people feeling washed up and abandoned and forgotten. That is not Jesus! Jesus cares deeply about you. He cares deeply about your families. He cares deeply about your griefs and your joys. He cares more deeply and more insightfully about these things than you do yourself. Either you understand that you are broken and therefore, you cannot see, feel, or understand properly, truly and fully. But you have found the one person who can and you are prepared to be guided by him or are you still saying, "But first…" That seems to be the distinction

that is being made here.

Verse 58 doesn't seem like a great advert for Christianity. "Come with me. Foxes have their holes, (probably a sideswipe at that fox Herod in his fancy castles) birds have their nests but come and follow me. I don't have anywhere to sleep tonight. It isn't an invitation to a comfy life or a feather bed. The parallel is to 'take up your cross and follow me'. If you can trust Jesus with the hardest of things: being homeless, on the road, uncertainties, difficulties, hardships, you will be alright with all the softer things. This is not saying that for the whole of your Christian life that you will never have a bed to sleep in. But if it means that you are willing to trust him with that, that rest of it will just fall into place. If you can trust him with the hard things the easy things will just follow along. So, are you prepared to trust him with the hard things? Are you prepared to take up your cross and just say, 'Here I am'? 'Lead me.' We sing, 'Lead me oh thou great Yahweh. Lead me through the barren land'. This seems to be the call here for the disciples.

The Christian life is full of joys, full of pleasures, full of eases. Did you have breakfast this morning with a roof over your heads after a comfy night's sleep? There are so many good things in the Christian life and they all come from the hand of God. But we must not take our eyes off the necessity of being fit to serve in his kingdom and that means saying, "Yes Lord" Some days that will be harder than others. But it will still be okay.

We are going to sing 'We walk by faith and not by sight' 'I don't see where you are going Lord so I'm not going to follow'? That is not the way. Jesus sees and that's all we need to know. None of us has seen Heaven but Jesus has and we trust him to get us there. God makes promises and God gives hope. He saves sinners. All we are required to do is to trust him.

By faith we see the hand of God
In the light of creation's grand design
In the lives of those who prove His faithfulness
Who walk by faith and not by sight

[Verse 2]
By faith our fathers roamed the earth
With the power of His promise in their hearts
Of a holy city built by God's own hand
A place where peace and justice reign

[Chorus]
We will stand as children of the promise
We will fix our eyes on Him our soul's reward
Till the race is finished and the work is done
We'll walk by faith and not by sight

[Verse 3]
By faith the prophets saw a day
When the longed-for Messiah would appear
With the power to break the chains of sin and death
And rise triumphant from the grave

[Verse 4]
By faith the church was called to go
In the power of the Spirit to the lost
To deliver captives and to preach good news
In every corner of the earth