

Thirteenth Sunday of the Year – June 30, 2019

1 Kings 19: 16b. 19-21 Galatians 5: 1, 13-18 Luke 9: 51-62

Over the next few months, when we gather to celebrate the Eucharist, we will be going on a journey. Our travel guide will be St. Luke as he uses this framework of a journey by Jesus and his followers from Galilee to Jerusalem in order to



give his account of the ministry of Jesus. More than just a clever technique. It is his way of responding to the challenge Jesus makes to us of taking up the cross and following him – a statement which immediately preceded, in

the Gospel, the passage we heard today.

If we want to travel with Jesus on this journey, we will learn what is involved. Specifically, today, we learn that essential to doing this, taking up the cross, are both abandonment and freedom. To follow Jesus, to take up the cross, we must let go, abandon, what from the past holds us back, and be open to the freedom to take hold of what the future presents to us.

The different passage from God's speaking to us in the Scriptures give some good examples. This is evident in the story of Elisha and Elijah. Elisha is called to take up the mantle, the role, of prophecy. He is to carry on the work of Elijah. At first he hesitates. And then he acts. He abandons

what he has been doing. This is graphically illustrated for us in the cooking of oxen over the fire made from his plow. Nothing is left of what had been before.

St. Paul is writing to the Christians at Galatia. They felt that they had to follow Jewish practices in order to be true followers of Jesus. Paul tells them that they are not to subject themselves to obligations of the Old Covenant with all of its rules and regulations which was most often just a matter of formalism and show. They are to allow the Spirit to act in and through them. The key to following Jesus was to be free from the expectations of the "flesh", the "world" so that they could be free to enjoy the love of God and free to love others. The expectations of the world, of the "flesh," are limiting, restrictive, demanding. Think of the examples of advertising that tells us what we need to be or to have. These are such things as the perfect look, or entertainment, or possessions, or drugs, or alcohol or sex, or manipulation or control. There are many fantasies that are portrayed to us that really frustrate us or restrict us.

Jesus, as we are told in the Gospel passage we heard, had three encounters. Each taught a lesson. The Samaritans reject him. The world response, voiced by his followers, is to destroy. The response if Jesus was that we ought not be hindered by revenge. Simply let them be. To the one whom he says that he has no place to call home he is showing that he is not restricted by time or place. As to the one who wishes to bury his dead, he counsels to be totally unattached, noting is to hold us back, the restrictions of the past are to be abandoned.

To take up the cross daily as Jesus urges us means the abandonment of any of those things that restrict, that control

us, that limit us. These can be expectations others have of us or we have of ourselves. They can be prejudices we harbor, as well as anger, hatred or envy. But that abandonment also means true freedom. It means greater opportunities to experience God's loving presence around us in all persons and in all of creation. It also means that we can show true freedom in the choices made and the actions performed. Following Christ and carrying the cross daily with him is the ultimate act of reflecting our faith and trust in our good and gracious God.