

## Second Sunday after Trinity

Louise Beasley

1 Kings 19.15-16, 19-end

Galatians 5.1, 13-25

Luke 9.51-end

### **I'm all in.**

Each year, at Easter time, I go with my church family to Spring Harvest, a Christian holiday conference held at Butlins. This year, the theme song for the morning all-age worship was called 'I'm All In'. This energetic song invited us to become part of G.I.F.T. - 'God's International Fix-it Team' to help God fix up this world by joining up with the Greatest Hero of all, Jesus.



The repetitive chorus went: **I'm all in. We're all in. We're all in this together!**

The theme encouraged us to think about our discipleship. Are we just following Jesus while we are on our Christian Holiday, or only on Sundays when we go to church? Or are we 'all in' and always following Jesus as we live our life on earth? Our Gospel reading today touches on this theme and offers us three people who say to Jesus, 'I'll follow you,' 'I'm all in,' yet their responses showed hesitation.

Looking at the start of our Gospel reading, sees a turning point in Luke's account of the life and ministry of Jesus. We are told that Jesus knowingly took the road to Jerusalem, to the cross and, by implication, knew the destiny that awaited him there. This destiny would conclude in his being 'taken up to heaven.'

The first experience he encounters on the journey is rejection by the inhabitants of a Samaritan village. When two of the disciples asked whether they should call down fire from heaven on them, Jesus rebuked them. It is a complete denial of everything for which he stands. His is a way of forgiveness and love, not of anger and revenge. They left this village and carried on their journey. As they were travelling, we heard today three people who wanted to become Jesus' disciples. They say, 'I'm all in' yet follow this with a 'but'. Jesus' response to these three people adds to a powerful expression of the demands that can be involved in following Jesus and serving God's Kingdom. One must

be willing to give up home and family and even, in a special case, the possibility of fulfilling the family responsibility of burying one's parent.

Jesus' response in the last case is genuinely shocking. 'Leave the dead to bury their dead', he says. What exactly the phrase means is much debated. Indeed, Jesus is not denying our general responsibility in this area. From this disciple, however, a decision is being demanded. He is sufficiently alive spiritually to want to share in Jesus' ministry. Therefore, he's told to let those who are spiritually dead bury the physical dead.

Jesus' response: 'No one who puts a hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.' This saying underlines how the vocation to serve the Kingdom can disrupt ordinary relationships, including those within a family. The call of Christ can be so compelling that it makes a person walk a path that family and friends cannot follow or even understand.

The image of the plough is also used in our first reading, reminding us that we must be focused and look ahead. If a ploughman starts to look back, his plough line would become crooked. If that happens, the field he ploughs will not yield a full harvest. In this reading, Elisha is ploughing. The prophet Elijah went up to Elisha and called him to follow him and eventually become his successor. Elisha's vocation is progressive; he is called first to be a servant and disciple, then later to be Elijah's successor. This is the usual pattern of many vocations where there is a time of apprenticeship, training and learning before we enter into the fullness of our calling. What is emphasised again is the total and immediate response that is being demanded and given.

In verse 19 of our Kings reading, Elijah threw his mantle over Elisha when Elijah found Elisha ploughing. The prophet Elijah wore a mantle. We do not know exactly what it looked like, but it was apparently an outer garment like a cloak made of cloth. The passing of the mantle from Elijah to Elisha symbolised the passing of prophetic authority to Elisha. The mantle or cloak is important as a sign of authority and power. When Elisha takes up the cloak, he takes on the work God gave Elijah. When we decide to follow Jesus, we take on Jesus' character and live our lives in the same way as Him, which is a life of love and service.

So, what does our call discipleship look like?

This week I reflected on my discipleship and admitted that sometimes I have got it wrong. The tortoise and the hare fable came to mind. You know the classic fable: The arrogant rabbit challenges the other animals to a race. The tortoise accepts, much to the hare's bemusement. The race begins, and the rabbit dashes ahead—so far ahead, in fact, that the rabbit has time to nap. But while the hare sleeps, the tortoise faithfully plods on and crosses the finish line first in a dramatic way. The moral of the story: Slow and steady wins the race.

There have been times when I've shown that I'm 'all in' with a lot of initial excitement and enthusiasm, racing ahead with reading my Bible but not exactly 'lingering' and 'digesting' what I've read. Or I've set an ambitious plan for times of prayer, but then I tire and lose focus. I think God wants us to be 'all in'; however, we must adopt a sustainable pace where the spirit can work in our lives to draw us deeper in our relationship with God. We need to adopt a pace where we can flourish as a disciple and be fruitful.

I've realised that I must be more like the tortoise, and I wonder if you feel the same today. The tortoise continues its life journey (or race, as St Paul would say), striving for renewal through a steady rhythm of Bible reading and prayer. The tortoise is in it for the long haul, going slow enough to journey alongside other tortoises, loving them, nurturing them and encouraging them on their journey.

The call of Jesus to discipleship, to be 'all in' requires us to have our hearts set on loving and serving Him. Reflecting on the words of Paul from our New Testament reading emphasises how the spirit brings freedom to live a life of faith and love. It reminds us that the church is where God's spirit dwells and where people can flourish in their Christian life as disciples and followers of Christ. But to flourish in our Christian life, we must show endurance and courage by being 'all in' for the long haul, allowing the Holy Spirit to dwell within us, and we journey through life together. It requires us to remain faithful and focused to the end, the end being an eternal life in heaven with Jesus.

Are you like the hare or the tortoise in your life as a disciple of Jesus?

(Opportunity to share)

Let us pray:

Lord, you are all-knowing and full of wisdom. Your plan is masterful. Help us as your disciples to follow you in every thought, word, and deed. Help us to deny the flesh, take up our cross and follow you. Give us endurance, courage and determination to run the race you have set for us. May we follow you all the days of our life.

Amen.