

TEXT: Luke 9:51-62  
THEME: Fit for the Kingdom of God  
SUBJECT: Vocation  
TITLE: Set Your Face

Third Sunday after Pentecost  
30 June 2011  
Messiah Moravian  
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The first half of this text requires a sense of humor to appreciate. Where were the disciples when Jesus taught them to love their enemies? What made the disciples believe they had the power to call down fire from heaven? Jesus had the patience of Job. (Read Luke 9:51-56)

The second half of this text is severe, dangerous even. Rather than domesticate it, I will attempt to find the grace in its uncompromising nature. (Read Luke 9:57-62)

Kierkegaard believed each human being is born with an eternal vocation, a vocation expressly for that individual. To be true to one's calling is the highest practice possible for a person. He quotes Shakespeare in Henry V, "Self-love is not so vile a sin as self-neglecting."

Kierkegaard claimed there is but one fault, one offense: disloyalty to one's own self, that is, denial of one's true vocation (vocation = call, not necessarily the same thing as your job). Eternity listens attentively, listens in order to discover whether the playing of the strings is pure and in time with itself.

Jesus set his face toward Jerusalem, toward his destiny, and the first thing he encounters is resistance. I don't know what Jerusalem is for you, what is your eternal vocation. I do know that when you set your face toward it, you will encounter resistance, resistance from within and from without.

Resistance will come from family and friends who care for you, who want to protect you from harm, who love your health and well being more than God. Sounds harsh doesn't it?

"Let the dead bury the dead" Jesus tells a man who wants to honor his parents. "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God." Harsh, indeed.

Until you realize turning your back on your eternal vocation is the sin of self-neglecting. When we sacrifice our true vocation on the altars of security or wealth or power, it will come back many years later, knife in hand, demanding its pound of flesh.

Ansel Adams, the great photographer of Yosemite Valley, was married and in his twenties still living with his mother and aunt. The time came when he had to choose

between two great passions - photography and the piano. His wife, Virginia, told him she would support him in whatever he believed to be his true calling.

His mother, however, pleaded in anguish, "Do not give up the piano! The camera cannot express the human soul!" Adams paused for a moment, then replied with confidence, "Perhaps the camera cannot, but the photographer can."

Resistance arises not only from family and friends, but arises first from within. Greg Levoy thinks one reason we ignore our eternal vocation is that we instinctively know the price it will exact.

In order to become authentic, to do what we are called to do, we have to give up something dear: a job, a house, a relationship, a belief, a lifestyle to which we have become accustomed, the prestige of being a big fish in any size pond, security, money, precious time, anger at somebody, or just the pleasure of cynicism.

Jan Hus set his face toward the Council of Constance to confront the abuse of power in the church, to bear witness to the truth he dedicated his life to serving. Hus' job was Rector of the University of Prague; his eternal vocation was to "Seek the truth, hear the truth, learn the truth, speak the truth, adhere to the truth, defend the truth to death, for the truth will make you free."

When Hus set his face toward the Council of Constance, the first thing he encountered was resistance, not from his enemies but from his friends. His friends did not trust the king who promised him safe passage.

Whatever Jesus calls you to do, it will be worth your life even if you lose it. To set your face toward Jerusalem will require sacrifice, a letting go of what you think you need in order to grasp the one thing necessary - to be true to your eternal vocation.