

Pentecost 3 Lectionary 13 - Sunday, June 26, 2022

Luke 9:51-62

Rev. Paul Sartison

*“Foxes have holes, birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.”*

Jesus has just sent some disciples ahead to the next town to prepare for him there, but they get to that town and find that the townspeople aren't very keen on Jesus staying there. So it's like this: Jesus doesn't have anywhere to stay. He just needs a place to stay; he's got nowhere to lay his head. Just like, well, millions of people.

James and John are mad about it all, so they say, “Lord, should we bring down fire from heaven and burn this place to the ground because they wouldn't receive you?” Jesus rebukes them: We don't hear what he says, but I can imagine it might be something like this: “You were with me just a few days ago when we fed thousands and thousands of people just because they needed something to eat. I've been curing diseases everywhere, and casting out demons, and saying that welcoming kids is like welcoming me, and I thought I was showing you something about how to love your neighbours, and you saw with your own eyes that I am all about feeding the hungry and healing the sick and caring about people who suffer and welcoming the weakest. And now when this town doesn't want me to come and visit, you say, “Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven and burn these people to the ground? You just don't get it, do you? You don't need to strike anyone down on my behalf. We just need a place to stay tonight.”

So they move on to the next town – maybe someone will let them stay there, and Jesus will have somewhere to lay his head.

After they hit the road again someone comes along and says to Jesus “I'll follow you wherever you go,” and Jesus says, “Foxes and birds have somewhere to

stay; I've got nowhere to lay my head." It's no more deep and profound than, "OK, come on along, but you should know that I don't know where we'll all stay tonight."

It's nothing new, really, if you think about it. Remember Christmas? Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem but the city's full of travellers and there's nowhere to stay. So Jesus is born in a stable somewhere. He kind of started his life with nowhere to lay his head.

So once again, Jesus needs a place to stay. So do James and John and the other disciples, and the women with names like Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Susanna who travel with them too.

As Val and I talked about this the other day I was trying to figure out how to say something profound and provocative and theological and deep about all this when Val said, "I don't know. I guess if Jesus said that to Joe (Joe's our son who has about a thousand sleeping bags and tents and an apartment full of outdoor gear), Joe would say, "OK, I'll bring sleeping bags." Or maybe someone would say, "You don't have anywhere to lay your head? Here – I've got an extra pillow."

That's what Jesus is doing here. At the beginning of this reading today we hear that Jesus has now, for the first time really, set his face to go to Jerusalem. He's got this determination, and he has hinted that when he gets to Jerusalem he will be turned over to the religious and political leaders, and he will suffer and die there. But he's determined; that's where he's going. He knows it's going to be hard and now along the way he's gathering people who will make a new kind of community. The community Jesus is making, and still making today, is not one that is built on family ties, or political agreement, or nationality or common language. It's not a pro-life or pro-choice community, it's not a straight-only or

whites-only or anybody-only community, it's not a right or left or right or wrong bunch of people; it's just the hodgepodge of people Jesus calls together. And the community that Jesus is making in this story and is making in our story is a community where people learn to say things like "I'll bring a sleeping bag," or "I've got an extra pillow," or "Here, I'll share my food," or simply something like, "We care about you, you matter, your story matters, you belong." We say it to each other; we say it to our neighbours – sometimes it looks and sounds like giving away bikes, like we saw happening here last week. Sometimes it looks and sounds like trying to live up to our promise that we will welcome everybody; sometimes it looks and sounds like trying to live justly and fairly in this land, or sometimes it just looks like sitting on the next chair and listening to someone whose heart is breaking...or whose heart is filled with joy.

Jesus says, "Foxes have holes, birds have nests, I've got nowhere to stay," and when he says that, he's making his home with everyone who has nowhere to stay, and he's making his home with us, making us into a community of people where anybody can have a place to lay their head.

I invite you to take a minute to think about when you've had no place to stay, if that's been something you've experienced. And Jesus says, "The Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head;" he makes his home with you, with anyone who has no place to stay.

Think about a time when you've received hospitality. A stranger welcomed you into their home when you needed a meal or a couch to sleep on, or you travelled a long way and a friend received you and cared for you – "Here's a sleeping bag, or a bed, and a pillow" – or someone just listened when you didn't need a place to lay your head but you needed someone, just on someone, to hear

you as you lay down your story or your hurts or your joys...and they received your story and your hurts and your joys.

Two times in this story today we hear someone say to Jesus, “I will follow you,” and one time right in the middle Jesus says to someone “Follow me.” At our Bible study on Monday night we talked a little bit about what it might mean to follow Jesus, and you know I think we kind of struggled a bit to answer that question. In this place we call ourselves followers of Jesus but we never quite pin down what exactly that means... But it does mean something like this: we’re always trying to work out what it means or just what it looks like to love God and to love our neighbour as the world changes and we follow Jesus to, well, who knows where? We give it a try, we get it right, we get it wrong, we go on to the next town like Jesus and his followers in this gospel, we go on to the next moment in our life, and we give it a try again.

We may or may not feel like we have a place to stay along the way. Maybe we really, literally, won’t have a place to stay some day; Jesus never promised that it would be easy. Sometimes it will feel like we’re following or sometimes we might think that we’re just floundering – the water shifts around us all the time. But Jesus does promise to lay his head here among us; to make his home with us and in the world. And even when he does finally have a place to lay his head in a cold and lonely tomb, the story won’t end there.

So we’ll follow...not sure where, just seeing where we end up at the end of each day. We’ll follow. We’ll see. And we’ll learn to love and we will be loved all along the way.

AMEN.