

NIV Luke 9:51 As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. ...61 Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-by to my family." 62 Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

Opening Prayer: NIV Psalm 19:12 (Oh Lord our rock and our redeemer) Forgive my hidden faults. 13 Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then will I be blameless, innocent of great transgression. 14 May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer. Amen.

Introduction: Making Choices is a tough job. The more freedom you have the more choices you have. The more blessings you have the more responsibility you have to use them to give glory to the Lord, being a blessing for others. Jesus Christ knew exactly what to do and when to do it. His timing was perfect because his wisdom was perfect. His use of his time and energy was perfect because his priority was perfect. As followers of the Crucified and Resurrected Christ, we look to him for help in our choices, in using our time our talents and treasures first for His Kingdom.

Lord Jesus Empower Us to Serve You First!

Part 1. The Right Time in the Kingdom of God

Luke 9:51 As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. ...

At the time of our text in Luke chapter 9, Jesus switched into high gear on his way to the cross. Jesus now would turn south to go up to Jerusalem, leaving Galilee, Samaria and the fishing villages behind for the excruciating pain of the cross at the hands of the Roman Soldiers in the capitol city of Jerusalem. This didn't sit well with the people of Galilee. Maybe it was their dislike of the people of Judea, their hatred for everything Judean or that they wanted Jesus all to themselves or that some of them were afraid of the repercussions of the Jewish leaders, for whatever reason they refused to welcome Jesus into their town. Notice the reaction of Jesus and the reaction of James and John, two of the apostles. James and John the Sons of Thunder want to call down lightning bolts on the heads of everyone who disrespected Jesus Christ. While Jesus Christ shows compassion, patience and even understanding, by simply finding a different village to stay in for the night. Jesus was upset with James and John for thinking of judgement and punishment on that time. At that is the key to understanding God's plan, timing.

The disciples had a tough time understand Jesus Christs timing for things. After Jesus resurrection from the dead, and after Jesus taught them for more than a month about the Kingdom of God, they still didn't understand timing. They asked Jesus "Are you at this time going to restore the Kingdom to Israel?" Jesus told them "No at this time I'm going to send you the Holy Spirit so you can be my witnesses, saving sinners from death and hell by bringing the message of peace won on the cross by your Savior." And then when Jesus ascends into heaven, we are told the disciples are frozen staring into the sky, not understanding what to do with their time. Two angels are sent by Jesus Christ to tell them, "This same Jesus you saw go into heaven will return the same way." Then they went to Jerusalem and waited for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus timing was perfect. Jesus knew the right thing to do at the right time and he did it perfectly. The work or mission of our Lord can be divided into three stages. The first stage was his

mission to be the suffering servant and take the punishment of our sins on himself. He stopped with the miracles, preaching and teaching in Galilee and marched to Jerusalem allowing himself to be crucified for us. The second stage of the work of our Savior began when he ascended, seeing the Holy Spirit to His Apostles. He works through his people to take the message of forgiveness of sins out to sinners so that they might be freed from death and hell forever. The third stage is coming yet. The same Jesus who was patient and compassionate to his enemies giving them time showing them mercy even praying for them to receive forgiveness, will return to earth to Judge all people. He will separate believers in him from unbelievers in him as the Savior from Sin. And his judgement will bring an end to the great commission, preaching and teaching the gospel.

This same Jesus...because you and I believe in Jesus Christ, we know what we are to do with the time we are living in today. Now is not the time for getting even, now is not the time for passing judgement and doling out punishment for the enemies of Jesus Christ. Now is the time for preaching and teaching the word of God. Showing patience and mercy to those who will listen to the word of God, yet also knowing when to move on when someone no longer wants to hear about the peace Jesus Christ has won between sinners and their Creator.

The apostle Paul calls us God's fellow workers. What an honor to be part of God's loving plan for our family friends, coworkers and neighbors. I love playing baseball. I get my kids to play ball in the backyard as often as I can. One of the things I've been trying to teach my youngest son is to wait his turn. And he asks so politely know, "Dad, please, when is it my turn?" And if I tell him not yet, often times he will just run and sit in the shade pouting or waiting for his turn. I can see him just licking his chops, thinking about his turn to bat, wishing he was batting now, thinking about when he gets to bat and how he is going to get a good hit. All the while I tell him, if you don't play the field you don't get to bat. Help Ana first then you will get your turn.

Our sinful selfish nature is always worried about our turn, when am I going to get mine? What about my time to get good things? When are we going to be on top? Our sinful selfish nature doesn't trust God and so does not want to wait for God's timing. Whether its waiting for a spouse, waiting for sex, waiting for a good job, waiting for a promotion, waiting for good health, waiting for heaven, waiting for God's timing is hard for Christians because of our selfish sinful nature. We want to know from God please God tell me when is it my turn to be served, to win, to get the upper hand, to be successful to be blessed?" It's coming God promises us. Look at the cross, look at your baptism your adoption into God's family. Your overflowing heavenly blessings are coming. IN the meantime...

Part 2. The Right Priority in the Kingdom of God

As Jesus was heading out of Samaria towards Jerusalem with that head on collision with the cross for our sins, a man thinking he would get on Jesus good side ,says

"I will follow you WHEREVER you go!" Some people only would follow Jesus if he would lead them where they wanted to go, like he was some sort of hired guide or hired taxi service. This man says Wherever you go I will follow. Sounds great right? But Jesus reminds him that if you follow him joining the ranks of soldiers of the cross, the priority is not in gaining a nice home. Another man says He will still follow Jesus even if there's no home included in the deal. He simply asks to go back home and bury his father FIRST. Jesus doesn't skip a beat and cuts to the heart of this man, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the Kingdom of God." Another man is not bothered with having no home and neither is he concerned about missing the funeral of his loved

ones. He says I will follow you Jesus, but FIRST I want to go back and say good bye to my family.” IT doesn’t sound unreasonable, yet Jesus pierces this man’s heart as well and says, “No one who puts hi hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the Kingdom of God.”

These words seem harsh to my ears and make my mind short circuit. Aren’t family and friends house and home blessings from god? Should we not take care of the blessings God gives to us? Yes all gifts from God come with responsibilities to use them according to his plan and purpose. I think there are two keys phrases that are repeated twice to help us understand Jesus penetrating words for our souls. FIRST. The men have a weakness or problem when it comes to following Jesus, their weakness isn’t with sinful desires that they can’t shake off or overcome, say anger, envy, drunkenness etc. Their weakness is with the gifts God gives them. Their priorities are not in the right order. One man has his overriding principle of life as a provider, providing house and home shelter for his family. Another man has the overarching principle of his life as family and making sure your house is all in order to leave your children with a great nest egg or inheritance.

Jesus words remind us of the common phrase we all know, ‘God first family second career third.’” When following Jesus sometimes it calls for us to pick up the cross and suffer, giving up good things in order to do great things for God’s Kingdom. That’s the other phrase that Jesus repeats...”Proclaim the Kingdom of God...fit for service in the Kingdom of God.” As members of the Kingdom, blood bought by the Son of God, equipped by the Holy Spirit with the good news of peace, we are to fight to carry the gospel message out to the world while we can. The time is fast approaching for Jesus to return and he will not return as a cute cuddly baby laying in a manger. He will return as the Judge of the Living and the dead. Our time is short. We have only a few years at best to wield the sword of the truth to protect our loved ones and push back the forces of dark lies and hopelessness that is everywhere in this world. If that means giving up a couple more hours after church for a voters meeting...If that means giving up a few girls softball games to serve on the school board...If that means skipping out on a Friday fish fry a couple times to give more money to teach the gospel to the children of our community or build a n outpost in India for the gospel so be it.

This past week I heard one of the young men who were drafted into the NBA say that their parents never missed one of their games growing up. It made me feel bad as if I wasn’t a good parent because I have not been there for them as a good parent should. I should’ve have worked harder done more to have more time with my children. I feel like Oscar Schindler from Schindlers list. It’s true I have wasted time and my resources on dumb things and because of that had to miss out on my children’s activities. I hope they will forgive me for being so foolish. But also know that when we pick up the cross and give up good things... a nice home, time with children and loved ones for God’s Kingdom it is well worth it. Of course for the souls that now hear the good news of their creator that made them and saved them but also for our children as they see what matters the most in life, what a Christian’s overriding principle in life is... God first family second. For putting God first and trusting him we will always get taken care of, even for all eternity. First let’s fight the good fight pick up our cross denying sinful pleasures even giving up good things fro God’s Kingdom work then let’s enjoy the blessings the Lord has given to us now and for all eternity!