

**The Committed Journey**  
**2 Kings 2:1-2, 6-14**  
**Luke 9:51-62**

Football coach Lou Holtz points out the difference between being merely involved and being truly committed to the cause: “The kamikaze pilot who was able to fly fifty missions was involved but not committed.”

Jesus wants commitment, not just involvement. At first glance, this text in Luke seems as if Jesus is being harsh and unreasonable. It is important to keep in mind then that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. He was on his way to the ambush that would beat him, condemn him, and hang him on a cross to die. He knew the road ahead was a difficult one to take and not for the faint of heart. Those who wished to follow him to Jerusalem must be completely committed to the cause—no matter what happened or where the journey ended.

On the road to Jerusalem, Jesus and his disciples first encounter rejection in a village of Samaritans. Two disciples, James and John, ask Jesus if they should punish the Samaritans for rejecting Jesus, but Jesus rebukes his disciples and they travel on to the next town. In the next town, Jesus is not rejected, but he encounters a series of reluctant followers.

One potential follower remarks to Jesus, “I will follow you wherever you go.” And Jesus responds, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” In essence, Jesus is telling this would-be follower that the road ahead is filled with hardship. The road ahead will be challenging and difficult. There will be no flowery receptions for Jesus in Jerusalem. Nor will they find earthly fulfillment at the end of the road. There is no comfy bed to sleep on waiting for them. Rest and contentment will not be achieved in the near future!

I vividly remember when I was a short term missionary in Kenya. Our group stayed in tents the whole month we were there. I had brought with me an inflatable pool air mat thinking it would be more comfortable than sleeping on the ground. Unfortunately the mat only lasted a few days into the trip before it was punctured and I had to sleep the rest on the trip on hard rocky ground. Knowing that we had weeks left on the trip, I simply had to get used to sleeping on the hard uncomfortable ground. But even sleeping on the hard ground would be living in paradise compared to the road that was ahead of Jesus. I at least got to sleep in peace without the fear of what was to come.

The second would-be follower encounter is with a man that Jesus told to follow him. The man responded, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.” While this request is not an unreasonable request, it is however unacceptable to Jesus at this time. Jesus responds, “Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” As harsh as it sounds we must remember the context. You see, Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem to face his crucifixion. He doesn’t have the time to wait for any would be followers to take care of their personal situations. He was at the point in his ministry that anyone who would follow would have to leave everything behind and get on board. There was no time to do anything other than follow Jesus and proclaim God’s reign. If the man really wanted to follow Jesus, then he would have to get on board and let others take care of his father’s burial needs. He did not have time to get both done.

The next would-be follower has a similar request. He tells Jesus, “I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home.” And Jesus responds, “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.” Again, we may wonder why Jesus appears so harsh, but again we must remember that the time had come; the urgency was at hand. There was no time to even go back and say goodbye to their families! It was either go now or don’t go at all.

In essence, Jesus was telling these followers that if they didn’t jump in with both feet now, then they wouldn’t make it on the journey. The road ahead was not going to be easy and there was no time to waste or clean up messes before they left. It was now or never. There was no time to start on the journey and then look back and wonder what they forgot to take care of before they left. These followers could not effectively move forward if they continued to look backward. Try making a straight plow line while looking backwards!

While the urgency is not the same today, Jesus still wants the same level of commitment. Faith in Jesus is not something we should put at the bottom of our priority list and assume we have all our ducks in a row. Rather, Jesus wants us to jump in with both feet. He wants us to make a full commitment and be on the committed journey with him.

I am sure if you were to reflect on your school days, you can come up with a teacher or two who really inspired you. These were not the teachers that barely made an effort to teach. The ones that made the most impact were the ones that were truly committed to teaching. They were the ones who really cared about the students and went way beyond their pay and allotted time to do what was best for the students.

Or consider having a house built. You would want to hire a contractor who was committed to doing excellent work. You would want to find that no corners were cut and that the contractor really made the commitment to do the best he was able to make your house into a beautiful home.

Or how about going to a doctor? Would you want a doctor that didn't really care about her patients or practicing medicine? Of course not. Nor would you want an investor who wasn't really looking out for his clients. The point is that we know what it is like to work with those who are really committed to their cause. So too, Jesus wants that level of commitment to him. He doesn't want us only half-committed. He wants us so committed that we will do whatever it takes to follow him, no matter where the journey leads.

A kamikaze pilot who has flown over fifty missions is obviously not committed to the cause. So what will it take in your life to reach the level of commitment that God desires? Will it take a change of priorities in your life? Will it take a letting go of something? What ever it is, I encourage you to step up to the plate and jump in with both feet. The road ahead won't be easy, but the end result will be totally worth it! Amen.

## **Prayer:**

Gracious Lord,  
Your commitment to us is unlimited and steadfast. Help us to step up our commitment to you in every aspect of our lives so that you rest assured that we are in with both feet. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.