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Message: For or Against Jesus?

Text: Luke 9:51-62

Introduction

- A. Today we begin a new section in Luke's gospel, the lengthiest section comprising almost 37%, extending into chapter 19. The words of and about Jesus Christ, along with His gracious and miraculous works in Luke's gospel up to chapter 9, verse 51 reveal to us the person and gospel of God's divine Son, so that He might become and continue to be our object of saving, justifying faith, for as God's Word says in Romans 10:17 ...

Romans 10:17 So **faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.**

- B. Now, beginning with Luke 9:51, we, the readers and hearers of this gospel are confronted with a life and death decision - will we follow Christ as Lord, or not. Are we for or against the Lord Jesus.
- C. When we come to chapter 9 verse 51 we see that our risen Christ has inspired Luke to make a literary turn in his gospel account. Here we see Jesus resolutely sets His face to journey to Jerusalem. It will be his final journey there during His ministry on earth, for this is His journey to the cross, to fulfill His purpose for coming to us.

Luke 9:51 When the days were approaching for His ascension, **He was determined (Gk: set His face) to go to Jerusalem;**

- D. Through this literary turn, Jesus invites all of us who hear and read to follow Him to Jerusalem, to deny ourselves, take up our crosses daily, and follow Jesus as Lord and Messiah, as He had just previously taught His disciples.

Luke 9:23 And He was saying to *them* all, **"If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me."**²⁴ "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.

- E. What is interesting and striking about these opening verses of Jesus's journey to Jerusalem which invite us to follow Him to the cross, is that they are immediately preceded by the words of Jesus on the subject of being for or against Jesus. The choice to resolutely, wholeheartedly deny ourselves of our own will and pleasures, to take up our crosses daily and follow Jesus is to be understood as a choice to be for or against Jesus as our Lord, God, and King. This distinction will continue to be made throughout this journey section in Luke, as we see in 11:23. To be a Christian, a disciple of Jesus, is an all or nothing proposition.

Luke 9:50 But Jesus said to him, "Do not hinder *him*; for **he who is not against you is**

for you."

Luke 11:23 "**He who is not with Me is against Me**; and he who does not gather with Me, scatters.

- F. In 9:51-62 we see 4 cases that both warn us what being against Jesus looks like, and invite us to truly follow Him. The first case shows those who are very consciously against Jesus, but the latter three cases graciously expose the dangers of being deceived into thinking we are for Jesus when we are actually against Him. In every case, Jesus wants us to see His warnings as a means of giving us His grace, keeping us from the path of eternal death, and leading us in the way of eternal life.

I. 9:51-56 Warning #1 Outright rejection.

Luke 9:51 When the days were approaching for His ascension, He was determined (Gk: set his face) to go to Jerusalem;⁵² and He sent messengers on ahead of Him, and **they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for Him.**

- A. (Show map of Israel) The region of the Samaritans lay in between Judah and Galilee. While some devout Jews traveling between Judea and Galilee would avoid traveling through Samaria by traveling on the eastern side of the Jordan River, the 1st century Jewish historian, Josephus, informs us, "It was the custom of the Galileans, when they came to the holy city at the festivals, to take their journeys through the country of the Samaritans" (Antiquities of the Jews, Book XX.VI.1). Taking the direct route from Galilee to Jerusalem, over 60 miles, would require about a 3 day journey, so Jesus sent messengers ahead to perhaps proclaim the gospel of the kingdom and likely make accommodations for the night.
1. Some would shake the dust off of their feet when leaving Samaritan territory, regarding Samaritans as unclean half-breeds, who adulterated the worship of God (they only accepted the 5 books of Moses and worshiped on Mt Gerazim) and were excluded from the people of God. Samaritans were a mixed race. Samaria was the capitol of northern Israel when it fell in 722 BC to the Assyrians, who deported many northern Jews and replaced them with other nationalities.

2 Kings 17:24 **The king of Assyria brought men from Babylon and from Cuthah and from Avva and from Hamath and Sephar-vaim, and settled them in the cities of Samaria in place of the sons of Israel. So they possessed Samaria and lived in its cities.**²⁵ At the beginning of their living there, they did not fear the LORD; therefore the LORD sent lions among them which killed some of them.²⁶ So they spoke to the king of Assyria, saying, "The nations whom you have carried away into exile in the cities of Samaria do not know the custom of the god of the land; so he has sent lions among them, and behold, they kill them because they do not know the custom of the god of the land."²⁷ Then **the king of Assyria commanded, saying, "Take there one of the priests whom you carried away into exile and let him go and live there; and let him teach them the**

custom of the god of the land."²⁸ So one of the priests whom they had carried away into exile from Samaria came and lived at Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the LORD.²⁹ **But every nation still made gods of its own and put them in the houses of the high places which the people of Samaria had made,** every nation in their cities in which they lived.

2. There was continual fighting and animosity between Jews and Samaritans. After Jewish independence under the Maccabees, the Jews burned the Samaritan temple on Mt Gerazim in 128 BC. So there was no love lost between them.

B. When the Samaritans saw that Jesus had set his face toward Jerusalem, they would not receive Him into their village. Their historical baggage and bias against Jews made it hard for them to receive the truth from Jesus. Be careful to avoid making past history with parents, church, other Christians an obstacle to hearing Christ.

Luke 9:53 **But they did not receive Him, because He was traveling (GK: his face was going) toward Jerusalem.**

1. This is a case of conscious rejection of Jesus as God's Messiah and their Savior. Their unregenerate hearts are reflected in the first of 4 soils in Jesus's parable of the Sower.

Luke 8:12 "Those beside the road are those who have heard; then **the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved.**

2. So this case serves as a warning to all who consciously reject, ignore Jesus as their Lord, God, and Savior. If you choose to refuse Him who now speaks to us from heaven, you will have no choice but to be condemned by Him when He returns to judge the world in righteousness. You will have no choice but to admit that God truly raised Him from the dead to be both Lord and Messiah/King over all creation, and to receive His just verdict condemning you to hell for all eternity. It is Christ's kindness and grace that He should warn us in this way while we still have opportunity to confess our rebellion, our hostility against Him, repent and receive Him as Lord and Savior.

C. But there is also a warning to true disciples to avoid an ungracious heart toward unbelievers and wish for their immediate destruction rather than wish for their repentance.

Luke 9:54 When His disciples James and John saw *this*, they said, "**Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?**"

1. Elijah had called down fire on 2 companies of 50 soldiers each sent from King Ahaziah in Samaria, proving that he truly was a man/prophet of God to those who had no respect for his office.

2 Kings 1:9 Then the king sent to him a captain of fifty with his fifty. And he went up to him, and behold, he was sitting on the top of the hill. And he said to him, "O man of God,

the king says, 'Come down.'" ¹⁰ Elijah replied to the captain of fifty, "**If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty.**" Then fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty. ¹¹ So he again sent to him another captain of fifty with his fifty. And he said to him, "O man of God, thus says the king, 'Come down quickly.'" ¹² Elijah replied to them, "**If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty.**" Then the fire of God came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.

2. James and John were part of Jesus's inner circle of disciples. Yet they were not prepared for the rejection that comes with following Jesus to Jerusalem, to the cross. They had been previously commanded by Jesus to shake the dust off of their sandals as a warning to those who rejected their message. They had never asked the Lord to destroy Israelite villages who rejected them. But now they desire the destruction of their ethnic enemies. Christ through Luke continues to emphasize that He has come to be the Savior of all people, that we are to love our enemies and do good to them.

Luke 9:5 "And **as for those who do not receive you**, as you go out from that city, **shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.**"

Luke 6:27 "But I say to you who hear, **love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,** ²⁸ **bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.**

3. Jesus rebukes their attitude. Some of our contemporary translations (ESV, NIV, NLT) omit all the words of Jesus's rebuke, due to their omission from many early Greek manuscripts. But Jesus nonetheless is clearly rebuking their attitude in verse 55, and the theological content of His words in verse 56 is clearly repeated elsewhere in Scripture (E.g., John 3:17).

Luke 9:55 **But He turned and rebuked them**, and said, "*You do not know what kind of spirit you are of;* ⁵⁶ for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." And they went on to another village.

John 3:17 "For **God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.**

4. The disciples not only failed to understand Jesus's teaching concerning His death in Jerusalem, but also the purpose for His death - bringing salvation to all peoples.

Luke 9:44 "Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men." ⁴⁵ **But they did not understand this statement**, and it was concealed from them so that they would not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask Him about this statement.

Luke 24:46 and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the **Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day,** ⁴⁷ and that **repentance for forgiveness of sins**

would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

5. This is the only negative mention of Samaritans in Luke, the others being commended as belonging to the household of faith (fitting the outcast motif).

Luke 10:33 "But a **Samaritan**, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion,

Luke 17:15 Now one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice,¹⁶ and he fell on his face at His feet, giving thanks to Him. And he was a **Samaritan**.¹⁷ Then Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine-- where are they?"¹⁸ "Was no one found who returned to give glory to God, except this foreigner?"¹⁹ And He said to him, "Stand up and go; your faith has made you well."

6. Note how later in Acts Luke shows us how the patience of the Lord led to the repentance of many in Samaria. Notice also that "John" was one who prayed for and brought the blessing of the Spirit upon those whom he had earlier desired to destroy. May God so change our hearts.

Acts 8:4 Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word.⁵ **Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them.**⁶ The crowds with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing.⁷ For in the case of many who had unclean spirits, they were coming out of them shouting with a loud voice; and many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed.⁸ **So there was much rejoicing in that city.**

Acts 8:14 Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and **John**,¹⁵ who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.¹⁶ For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.¹⁷ Then they began laying their hands on them, and **they were receiving the Holy Spirit.**

7. Now is the time to warn people of God's coming judgment, but now is not the time for that judgment. We need Christ's spirit.

II. 9:57-58 Warning #2 No shallow commitment.

Luke 9:57 As they were going along the road, someone said to Him, "I will **follow** You wherever You go."⁵⁸ And Jesus said to him, "**The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.**"

Luke 9:59 And He said to another, "**Follow Me.**"

Luke 9:61 Another also said, "I will **follow** You, Lord; ..."

- A. The remaining verses in this section address 3 individuals centering around the term “follow” (vss 57,59,61). Unlike the outright rejection of Jesus and opposition to Jesus by the Samaritans, these 3 individuals “appear” to be “for” Jesus, on Jesus’s side. None say they refuse to follow Jesus - all verbally indicate they will follow Him. But these 3 encounters with Jesus warn us against self-deception. What might sound like alignment with Jesus might actually be opposition to Jesus.
- B. Instead of commending this individual (a “scribe,” Mt 8:19) on what appears to be wholehearted commitment to follow Jesus wherever that leads, Jesus warns him about making a shallow commitment that does not consider, and thus commit to the true cost of discipleship. Even animals have a place to “belong,” but disciples, like Jesus, will face rejection.

Luke 14:28 "For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and **calculate the cost** to see if he has enough to complete it? ... ³³ "So then, **none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.**

- C. This warning is similar in principle to the second picture in the parable of the Sower, where an unregenerate heart is pictured as rocky, shallow soil that supports only a shallow, superficial faith that eventually falls away when the heat of trials is turned up.

Luke 8:13 "Those on the rocky *soil are* those who, **when they hear, receive the word with joy**; and these have no *firm* root; **they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away.**

III. 9:59-60 Family demands do not supercede loyalty to Christ.

Luke 9:59 And He said to another, "**Follow Me.**" But he said, "Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father."⁶⁰ But He said to him, "**Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God.**"

- A. God’s Word tells us that whoever does not provide for his own family is worse than an unbeliever.

1 Timothy 5:8 But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

- B. But Jesus keeps this in perspective, teaching that discipleship requires Jesus be given priority over family. Self-denial is both the responsibility of both individuals and whole families. Jesus rejects even the “best” excuse to delay following Him. Jesus makes a play on the word “dead.” Let those who are spiritually dead give priority to the physically dead.

Luke 14:26 "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, **he cannot be My**

disciple.

- C. Unlike Levi (Luke 5:28) who, when Jesus called him to follow, immediately left everything, this man comes up with a reason not to follow, and least not immediately. This and the next case reflects in the parable of the Sower the unregenerated heart symbolized by the thorny soil, where the cares, concerns, and pleasures of this world choke out any bearing of fruit.

IV. 9:61-62 Warning #4 No looking back.

Luke 9:61 Another also said, "I will **follow** You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home."⁶² But Jesus said to him, "**No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back (Gk: looking to the things behind), is fit for the kingdom of God.**"

- A. "Looking back" is literally translated in the Greek as "looking to the things behind," referring to the things we left behind in order to follow Jesus.
- B. Jesus uses a farming metaphor to warn against turning back from following Him. A farmer would put one hand on the plow with a goad in the other. He must look forward, for turning back would result in veering off line. The Scriptures contain many examples to warn against looking back resulting to falling away from the Lord.
1. Lot's wife looked back after departing Sodom.

Genesis 19:26 But his wife, from behind him, **looked back**, and she became a pillar of salt.

2. Israel looked back after the exodus.

Exodus 16:3 The sons of Israel said to them, "**Would that we had died by the LORD'S hand in the land of Egypt**, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

Acts 7:39 "Our fathers were unwilling to be obedient to him, but repudiated him and **in their hearts turned back to Egypt**,

- C. Christ, though His apostle Paul encourages us to forget what we left behind in order to follow Jesus, and look ahead to the prize of the resurrection when Christ returns for us.

Philippians 3:8 More than that, **I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord**, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, **and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ**,⁹ and may be found in Him, ...¹¹ **in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.** ...¹³ Brethren, I do not

regard myself as having laid hold of *it* yet; but one thing *I do*: **forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,** ¹⁴ **I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.**

Conclusion

- A. All of us here today are either for or against Jesus. These warnings reveal that we can oppose Jesus by either outright, explicit rejection like the Samaritans, or by shallow, superficial expressions of commitment and faith. In these cases Jesus is teaching us readers and hearers that being a Christian is an all or nothing proposition, that He demands total, wholehearted commitment.
- B. In every case, Jesus wants us to see His warnings as a means of giving us His grace, keeping us from the path of eternal death, and leading us in the way of eternal life. The positive effect of Christ's warnings are not to be measured by how they impact our emotions - how they make us feel, but how they impact our following Jesus, how they preserve and protect our wholehearted faith in Christ.
- C. Out of love for the Father and for those God had given to Him, for the joy set before Him, Jesus set His face to go to Jerusalem, to the cross, fulfilling God's purpose to save all who by faith imitate Jesus.

Luke 9:51 When the days were approaching for His ascension, **He was determined (Gk: set His face) to go to Jerusalem;**

- D. For the love of Christ and the joy He sets before us, Jesus invites us to be for Him, to follow Him, first to self-denial and suffering, but then to eternal glory with Him.