



Ord Sunday 13

THE NEW SHOFAR

Love is more powerful than hate

We are living in the time of Divine saving activity

We are now living in God's Designated Time – and so we live accordingly

This verb Luke uses here at the opening of our reading - *being filled up, fulfilled or completed* is found only here in the Gospels. It is a significant reminder to Luke's readers that what is unfolding is an indication of what God is doing in creation, in human history. What is being *filled up* is God's plan, God's saving works. They have all been leading the world to this very moment unfolding in Jerusalem.

God does amazing things through our perseverance

And Jesus set his face resolutely towards Jerusalem.... The verb here means he hardened his face, he stiffened his resolve towards what Jerusalem meant for his ministry. He knows what is happening and the end towards which he is now moving. And he accepts it. Luke would have intentionally used this kind of language as it serves as a pastoral encouragement to his own Church. They too faced enormous threats and challenges. With so little hope, what should believers be doing? They should be *setting our face resolutely to persevering in what it is we are called to be doing by God!* The results rest with God. Only God can bring a resurrection from the dead, life from the grave, a new beginning from the tomb.

Luke suggests we are more like than the Samaritans than we might like to think

Then we have the example of the Samaritans. They *would not welcome him*. Now, for the first time in the Gospel, we have a group of people who reject Jesus out of hand. The question we need to be asking is "Why"? The answer is as simple as it was clear: he was a Jew and Samaritans hated Jews. The enduring question: *How could God be working in that person, through those people, in this or that community...* This is not a question of racism. It is about the genuine temptation to seek to limit the way, place and manner in which God can work. The Samaritans could not accept the need to open to the possibility of needing to put aside some of the religious things they held so fundamental, in order to give God a chance to act. Can works on both Jews and Samaritans!

The Sons of Thunder and the Way of Christ

James and John were the sons of Zebedee who interestingly, Mark calls the sons of thunder, a detail left out by Luke. They too are meant to function as highlighters for those reading the Gospel. What they want is for Jesus to *call down fire from heaven to consume these people....*

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This is a reference to 2 Kings 1:10 where Elijah says *If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and destroy both you and your fifty men.* They are thundering! Sadly, we too find this same kind of *thundering* within our own faith communities. Even more sadly, some of us can find ourselves among the thunder-ers. How often have we seen members of councils, individuals and groups *thundering* (gossiping? Speaking out against? Yelling? Finger pointing? Judging? Etc) against others who have been baptized into the same Christ? This is not acceptable in the Kingdom of God. If anyone has a right to thunder it is God. But he refrains. We would we feel we can act in this way?

If love is not at the heart of our words and deeds - we are far from God

To their surprise – but not to the surprise of anyone who ponders the call to Christian discipleship - *Jesus turned and rebuked them....* The rebuke is against the inability of the disciples to fully understand what the mission of Jesus is all about. The Master is making it clear that he is not a prophet like Elijah, that his ministry will be manifested in different ways. His ministry is founded on his teachings in the Sermon on the Mount. There he commanded – and this word needs to be stressed...*he commanded them... to love your enemies and do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who treat you badly.* The disciples appear to have already forgotten this foundational teaching. What a world we Christians could build in the Spirit, if we were the ones to model this so clearly in our own worlds! Note the combinations here – a command of Jesus and the action orientation of those commands. They are to be **doing** Jesus things, **living** the Way of Jesus, none of which are possible unless we intentionally plan our day around these options and offer up each new activity to God in prayer.

It is not easy being a faithful disciple of Christ!

How difficult would it be to head off to the next Samaritan village having just been rejected in the first one. We know from our own attempts in parish renewal, evangelism and our struggles to live as faithful disciples, persevering in faithfulness and missionary outreach is difficult – especially when faced with opposition. It is not hard to imagine the Sons of Thunder wanting Jesus to use his powers in the way Elijah had used his own relationship with God and wipe out those who had turned them away. The challenge is to respond to rejection with more mission! More action!

Even harder is trying to respond to rejection in the way Jesus teaches: *love your enemies and do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who treat you badly.* Jesus is not daunted by this rejection and Luke understands the reason for this – he is about the work of his Father and it is God who will bring his efforts and his obedience to fruitfulness. He does not take it personally as it is his Father they are rejecting. He moves on to persevere in revealing the love his Father has for them and leave the rest to Him.

As Luke writes so succinctly, *they went off to another village.* Nothing should bring the mission to a halt, not even failure and rejection. Once mission and ministry are understood to be a part of the fulfilling of the work God is already doing in human history and in creation, the key to satisfaction and peace is getting on with our vocation and not despairing our apparent failures to connect. We are collaborators with God. Failure or a lack of positive and visible results is in no way an indication that the mission is a failure. As long as a disciple is resolute in moving forward towards the goals set by God, and being open to the possibility of being called to transform the

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way we do what we do, the rest is up to God. By leaving our ministry in divine hands we know a peace that just filling our churches on Sundays could never bring.

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