

Sermon - Our Savior's Lutheran Church- 6/30/19

Text Luke 9:51-62

### Wannabes and Following

Grace and Peace to you and from our Lord Jesus Christ. What a Gospel in front of us today. At least two themes run through the Gospel that I could preach on. That's what preachers do - reading the text over and over until something sticks out.

The first theme is ethnic conflicts, or on a broader theme, conflicts among different groups. In my life there were numerous examples of conflicts between Norwegians and Swedes. Had to do with Norway being occupied by Nazi Germany and Sweden remaining neutral during World War 2.

A cute remembrance. I had been invited to attend a celebration marking the beginning of a Seminary I attended, The Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. Mine was the first class to open the new Seminary. Our roots were from the old Augustana Synod - a Swedish church body. All the big wigs were there, retired Bishops and Seminary professors, almost all Swedish. Sammy was along with me. Sammy was Rev Steve Samuelson, former Chaplain at Carthage College and the senior Pastor at a huge church in Racine, WI. Sammy had been invited to say a few words. Just before he was to speak he leaned over to me and said he was going to tell the Swedish joke. I knew what he meant and told him don't do it, the place is full of Swedes. But Sammy didn't listen and got up and told the joke.

A guy walks into a bar and asks the bartender if he wants to hear a Swedish joke. The bartender glares at him and says, "I was born in Stockholm. Do you see the bouncer over there? He was born in Uppsala. And the waitress over there? She was born in Malmo. Do you still want to say your stupid Swedish joke?" The guy says, "I guess not if I have to explain it three times."

Of course for us this concept of division and anger at different groups is not funny but deadly serious. It's also quite current in our contemporary climate. We see it every day - shite/Sunni- Pakistan/India, Black vs White, Immigration issues, Republican vs Democrat, Liberal vs Conservative. It's so bad nobody respects each other or talks with each other.

That's the first part of the Gospel. Two hot heads are sent to the area of Samaria. Remember, the Jews and the Samaritans hated each other. Couldn't have sent two worse people to dialogue with the Samaritans. They come back and suggest Jesus wipe them out. Get rid of them, they are worthless. The text says, Jesus rebukes them. Maybe also reminded them that:

My way is a way of peace.

We need to be welcoming.

We are all God's children

Welcome the stranger.

When you did it to the least of these my children you did it for me.

Yes, I could preach on that but I won't - or maybe I just did.

The second part of the Gospel has to do with a few people who want to be disciples. This is a difficult part of the Gospel. After all, the response from Jesus seems to me harsh. One guy says he will follow, but Jesus says something about foxes have holes. Tough to follow, even our comfort of a home doesn't cut it. To follow Jesus is more important than having the safety and security of a home. The next guy says he will follow, but first he has to bury his father. Jesus says, let the dead bury the dead. Whew. The third guy says, I will follow but first I have to say goodbye to my family. Jesus says, a person with his hand on the plow and looks back is not fit for the Kingdom of God. Again Whew.

I mean after all. Aren't our homes, our family important? What was Jesus telling you and me. He seems to be saying that these three people are Wannabes. Is that us? Or is Jesus saying something else entirely.

Perhaps an analogy would help. If we are driving along 41 and we are constantly looking back and not having our eyes on the road ahead, we soon will have a problem. It's important to always have our eyes on the road ahead. If we don't, we will have an accident. If you don't keep your eye on the road, if you don't keep your eye on Christ, on the love of God, you will hurt yourself and others. We need to seek first the kingdom of God. Are our homes and family important? Of course they are. But Jesus is suggesting that something is even more important. That is Jesus, and walking the walk and following him.

I remember years ago, an old Swedish Seminary professor in my of my classes said this, "The most difficult choices in life are not primarily between good and evil, but the most difficult choices in life are between what is good and what is best." Home, family, jobs and children, they are all good. Actually they are wonderful. But the best is Jesus. The best is the love of God. The best is the kingdom of God. The best is walking the walk. The best is the dwelling of the Holy Spirit. The best is doing the work of God in the world. The best is taking care of all of God's family on the globe. All the other things are good, but not the best. Jesus is saying, keep your eyes on the best. Then, we will not be Wanabees but true followers.

You know I could have preached on that, but then again, maybe I did.  
Amen- Let it be so.