

NO TURNING BACK

Luke 9:57-62
Galatians 5:13-15
June 29, 2025

I'm imagining the fire alarm blaring. I'm watching the first responder eating dinner with his or her family. I'm seeing that first responder drop everything and run toward the fire. Discipleship might be likened to this event—it is urgent, immediate, and sacrificial. Jesus calls people mid-walk, mid-life—and demands a decisive break from the norm.

“Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” (Luke 9:57-58) Jesus doesn't sugar-coat the cost. Following him means letting go of anything and everything that holds you back. There is no time to make sure everything is in order first. Following Jesus is **urgent**. It is not waiting until life feels “settled” before we are ready to follow.

“Let the dead bury their own dead.” (Luke 9:59-60) This sounds harsh, but Jesus is pointing to the time-sensitive nature of the Kingdom. The call overrides cultural expectations. It is like an emergency evacuation order when the forest fire approaches. People who wait to pack up everything first often miss their last chance to leave. Following Jesus is **time-sensitive**. It is not shelving the idea to look at again later.

“No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.” (Luke 9:61-62) This third pillar of discipleship means no longer business as usual; following Jesus requires a clean **break from past priorities**.

To follow is a phrase used so often these days. It's just a click on your keyboard and you're following someone. It requires little of you except to put your finger on a button.

I love the plow image for a couple of reasons:

- 1] When your hand is on the plow, you have to move to make it work; standing there holding the plow accomplishes nothing.
- 2] When you are plowing you have to have to be looking where you are going or you will veer off course; the tool is designed to work when you are moving and looking forward. I'm also thinking of a runner in a race who keeps looking over their shoulder and loses momentum and direction.

I think it is helpful here to look at Paul's words in Galatians that we read—about the Spirit-led life. It is marked by a break from one's old ways. Paul is pretty graphic with his description of the difference between the “desires of the flesh” and the “desires of the Spirit.” He lists some of those desires of the flesh as: idolatry, jealousy, anger, dissensions, and envy. But let's not get too complacent about not identifying with these particular characteristics. How about “winning or

succeeding at any cost,” or “my way or the highway,” or “bigger is better,” to name a few more. These characteristics mark a life lived by the world’s compass. Following Jesus and living by the Spirit both mean living by a new compass—or by what Paul calls the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, kindness, generosity, self-control—or how about social justice, hospitality, or welcome. Paul says it this way: “If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.” (Galatians 5:25) Following Jesus, living a Spirit-led life, or being a citizen of the kingdom of God is not a change in what we do, so much as a 180-degree pivot to how we live our lives—not what we do in life, but how we live our life.

It’s no accident that my last couple of sermons have led us to this text. Two months ago I preached about **experiencing the risen Lord**. Last month I preached about **preparing for ministry**. And today I am preaching about **no looking back**. I wonder what the Spirit has in store for me and you next month.

What are you holding onto that keeps you from plowing forward? To what are you attached today that keeps you from following Jesus fully? Where is the Spirit prompting you to move—and are you ready to go now?

“I have decided to follow Jesus ... no turning back; no turning back.”