



Year C     **Luke 9:51-62**

**51** Now as the time drew near for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely took the road for Jerusalem **52** and sent messengers ahead of him. These set out, and they went into a Samaritan village to make preparations for him, **53** but the people would not receive him because he was making for Jerusalem. **54** Seeing this, the disciples James and John said, 'Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven to burn them up?' **55** But he turned and rebuked them, **56** and they went off to another village. **57** As they travelled along they met a man on the road who said to him, 'I will follow you wherever you go.' **58** Jesus answered, 'Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.' **59** Another to whom he said, 'Follow me,' replied, 'Let me go and bury my father first.' **60** But he answered, 'Leave the dead to bury their dead; your duty is to go and spread the news of the kingdom of God.' **61** Another said, 'I will follow you, sir, but first let me go and say good-bye to my people at home.' **62** Jesus said to him, 'Once the hand is laid on the plough, no one who looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.'

Other readings: 1 Kings 19:16,19-21 Psalm 15 (16) Galatians 5:1,13-18

This gospel reading marks a crucial point in the Gospel of Luke. It is the beginning of the journey of Jesus to Jerusalem, the place of his passion and death, and of his resurrection. The evangelist curiously speaks of the time for him to be 'taken up to heaven'. The journey is not simply the journey to death on the cross, but the journey to resurrection, which will culminate in the return of Jesus to the presence of the Father, from whom he came.

The rest of the gospel shows that the challenges faced by Jesus, the challenges of fidelity and hardship, will be faced by his disciples too. Unlike James and John, Jesus quietly accepts that the Samaritans, who no longer worshipped in Jerusalem, are unwilling to welcome him. Jesus warns the first man he meets of the privations of discipleship, that he has 'nowhere to lay his head'. His reply to the second man, that he should 'leave the dead to bury their dead', seems harsh. It is typical of the blunt language of the prophets, calculated to shake the listener out of complacency. Finally, Jesus challenges the third man's attachment to family ties. When all is considered, even these bonds of loyalty are secondary to the call of God. This final little scene echoes the conversation of the prophet Elijah with his disciple and successor Elisha in the first reading.

*Am I prepared to make my journey to Jerusalem?*

*Is fidelity to the gospel the first priority in my life?*

*Pray for perseverance amid trials and hardships.*

*Pray for those who have no time for the good news.*