

WE'VE ALL RECEIVED DIFFERENT KINDS OF INVITATIONS DURING OUR LIVES. WE RECEIVE INVITATIONS FOR BIRTHDAYS,,, ANNIVERSARIES,,, CONFIRMATIONS,,, GRADUATIONS,,, WEDDINGS,,, AND MANY MORE.

HOW WE REACT TO THOSE INVITATIONS,,, DEPENDS ON WHAT TYPE OF CELEBRATION IT IS,,, HOW WELL WE KNOW THE PERSON INVITING US,,, AND EVEN,,, THE COST TO ATTEND IT.

TODAY,,, THE LORD IS EXTENDING TO US,,, HIS INVITATION TO FOLLOW HIM,,, ON A JOURNEY.

SOMETIMES,,, OUR SINFUL NATURE DOESN'T REACT VERY EXCITEDLY,,, WHEN WE RECEIVE SUCH AN INVITATION,,, BECAUSE OUR SINFUL NATURE,,, SEEMS TO BE CONTENT,,, TO WALK DOWN THE PATH OF DESTRUCTION,,, GOING CHEERFULLY,,, ON ITS WAY.

BUT OUR CHRISTIAN NATURE,,, REALIZES,,, THAT THE INVITATION,,, JESUS EXTENDS TO US,,, IS PRECIOUS. IT'S THE MOST IMPORTANT INVITATION,,, WE WILL EVER RECEIVE.

AS CHRISTIANS,,, WE UNDERSTAND THAT,,, WE NEED TO LOOK AT JESUS,,, AS THE ONE,,, WHO EXTENDED THIS INVITATION TO US.

IN JOHN 8:12,,, JESUS SAID:

“I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD,,, WHOEVER FOLLOWS ME,,, WILL NEVER WALK IN DARKNESS,,, BUT WILL HAVE THE LIGHT OF LIFE.”

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,,, THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD JESUS,,, IS TELLING US:

COME FOLLOW ME!

WE'VE ALL GONE ON JOURNEYS,,, AT SOME TIME IN OUR LIVES,,, HAVEN'T WE? JOURNEYS CAN BE EXCITING AND FUN TOO!

TODAY,,, WE FOLLOW JESUS ON HIS JOURNEY TOWARDS JERUSALEM. LAST WEEK,,, JESUS CALLED US,,, TO FORGIVENESS AND SALVATION.

JESUS PLACED US SECURELY AND PURPOSEFULLY BEFORE THE FATHER,,, SPIRITUALLY JUSTIFIED AND RIGHTEOUS,,, IF,,, WE'VE HAD A;

“*CONVERSION OF HEART,,, BY FAITH*”,,, BELIEVING IN THE FINISHED WORK ON THE CROSS,,, BY JESUS.

HOW WONDERFUL IT IS,,, THAT AS GOD'S CHILDREN,,, CAN LIVE IN GOD'S GRACE,,, WITH THE FATHER,,, SON AND HOLY SPIRIT,,, IN THE KINGDOM,,, FOREVER!

OUR HEARTS SHOULD BE BURSTING WITH JOY AND PRAISE TO GOD,,, YET,,, WE'RE REMINDED,,, IN LUKE'S GOSPEL READING TODAY,,, THAT OUR CALL TO SALVATION AND LIFE IN GOD'S GRACE,,, IN THE KINGDOM,,, DOESN'T COME WITHOUT OBLIGATION! BROTHERS & SISTERS,,, WE'RE CALLED TO BE HIS DISCIPLES AND THERE'S A COST FOR THAT!

SCRIPTURE TELLS US,,, THAT JESUS WAS ABSOLUTELY DETERMINED,,, TO JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM,,, TO COMPLETE HIS FATHERS WILL,,, FOR OUR SALVATION,,, AND;

***NOTHING.....* WAS GOING TO STOP HIM.**

HIS JOURNEY WAS SET,,, BECAUSE,,, JERUSALEM WAS THE PLACE WHERE THE TERRIBLE DEED,,, HIS CRUCIFIXION,,, WAS TO BE CARRIED OUT.

ON HIS JOURNEY,,, JESUS HAD TO PASS THROUGH A SAMARITAN VILLAGE. THE PEOPLE THERE,,, WERE THE DECENDANTS OF THE PAGAN PEOPLE,,, WHO SETTLED IN THAT PARTICULAR PART OF ISRAEL. THE SAMARITANS DIDN'T LIKE JEWS AND THEY HEARD,,, THAT JESUS WAS GOING THROUGH SAMARIA TO JERUSALEM,,, SO THEY DECIDED TO REJECT HIM,,, BY REFUSING JESUS ENTRY.

THIS WAS A GREAT MISTAKE AND REGRETABLY,,, THE SAME MISTAKE OF MANY TODAY. REJECTING JESUS! THE SAMARITANS ONGOING ARGUMENT WITH THE JEWS,,, ALLOWED THEIR “RELIGION:,,, TO CAUSE THEM TO MISS THE GREATEST MOMENT IN THEIR HISTORY.

JESUS WANTED TO INCLUDE THE SAMARITANS IN HIS REDEMPTIVE PLAN OF SALVATION,,, BUT THE RESPONSE TO JESUS' CALL TO FOLLOW HIM,,, WAS REJECTION!

THE DANGER OF OUR REJECTION OF JESUS,,, IS THAT;
HE WILL LET US HAVE OUR OWN WAY!
HE WILL NEVER FORCE ANYONE TO FOLLOW HIM.

SOME OF US,,, HAVE AREAS OF OUR LIVES,,, WHERE WE STILL REJECT,,, THE PRESENCE AND GRACE OF JESUS,,, AND REFUSE JESUS' ENTRY,,, JUST LIKE THE SAMARITANS,,, SO,,, HAVING BEEN REJECTED,,, JESUS CHOSE,,, TO GO TO ANOTHER VILLAGE.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,,, LET'S NOT MAKE THE SAME MISTAKE,,, AS THE SAMARITANS. LET'S INVITE JESUS INTO OUR LIVES!

SCRIPTURE TELLS US,,, THAT,,, AS JESUS CONTINUED HIS JOURNEY,,, A MAN APPROACHED HIM AND SAID:

"I WILL FOLLOW YOU,,, WHEREVER YOU GO!"

THAT MAN WAS A SCRIBE WHO JESUS WAS TEACHING ALONG WITH A LARGE CROWD. SO THE MAN KNEW THAT JESUS WAS A GREAT TEACHER AND WITH GREAT EMOTION,, HE DESIRED TO FOLLOW JESUS.

JESUS SAID: ***FOXES HAVE DENS AND BIRDS OF THE SKY HAVE NESTS,,, BUT THE SON OF MAN,,, HAS NOWHERE TO REST HIS HEAD.***

BUT,,, EMOTION ISN'T ENOUGH! THIS MAN DIDN'T THINK ABOUT,,, THE COST,,, OF FOLLOWING JESUS. A SIMPLE SUPERFICIAL DESIRE,,, ISN'T ENOUGH,,, TO BE A DISCIPLE OF JESUS!

JESUS SAID; ***PICK UP OUR CROSS AND DIE DAILY,,,*** MEANING,,, TO ONESELF.

IT MIGHT EVEN MEAN,,, OUR PHYSICAL DEATH,,, FOR OUR FAITH,,, LIKE WHAT'S OCCURRING DAILY,,, IN MANY MIDDLE EASTERN COUNTRIES TODAY.

TRUE DISCIPLESHIP,,, MEANS ***LIVING DIFFERENTLY,,,*** THAN THE SINFUL WORLD AROUND YOU.

IT MEANS **A COMMITMENT**,,, TO POSSIBLY GIVING UP,,
WHAT MANY OTHERS CONSIDERS AS BEING,,
NECESSARY!

MANY YEARS AGO,, I REMEMBER BISHOP BOB SAY:

*THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EMOTIONAL
INVOLVEMENT,, AS A DISCIPLE,, AND REAL
COMMITMENT,, IS LIKE A HAM AND EGG BREAKFAST.
THE CHICKEN GETS INVOLVED,, LAYING THE EGG,,
BUT,, THE PIG,, GETS TOTALLY COMMITTED”.*

COMMITMENT,, IS WHAT JESUS WANTS FROM US,, IN
OUR LIVES! HE WANTS OUR COMMITMENT TO SERVE
HIM,, NOT JUST BY COMING TO MASS,, ONE HOUR A
WEEK,, BUT TO SERVE HIM,, EVERY DAY THAT WE
BREATHE THE LIFE,, THAT HE GIVES TO US.

SCRIPTURE THEN SAYS THAT JESUS TURNED TO
ANOTHER MAN AND SAID;

FOLLOW ME!

THIS MAN HAS AN UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT JESUS
WAS ASKING,, HOWEVER,, HE ASKS IF HE CAN GO
HOME FIRST,, TO BURY HIS FATHER. THIS WAS HIS
WAY OF ASKING IF HE COULD PUT OFF HIS DECISION
OF COMMITMENT TO FOLLOW JESUS,, UNTIL A
LITTLE LATER ON,, AFTER HIS FATHER HAS DIED
AND AFTER THAT,, HE WOULD HAVE NO FURTHER
FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES.

WE KNOW THIS,, BECAUSE FOLLOWING THE JEWISH
BURIAL CUSTOMS OF THE DAY,, IF HIS FATHER WERE
DEAD,, HE WOULD ALREADY HAVE BEEN AT HOME,,
BECAUSE,, HE WOULD HAVE HAD ONLY 24 HOURS,,
TO BURY HIM. ON THE OTHER HAND,, IF HIS FATHER
WERE ALREADY DEAD AND BURIED,, THEN,, HE HAD
ONE YEAR TO WAIT,, TO DIG UP HIS BONES AND
REBURY THEM IN A SACRED PLACE.

JESUS RESPONSE WAS IN ESSENCE:

NO,, MY CALL ON YOUR LIFE,, TAKES FIRST PRIORITY!

TO MANY TIMES,, WE USE FAMILY,, AS AN EXCUSE
FOR NOT BEING COMMITTED TO JESUS.

OR FOR NOT WORSHIPPING AS WE SHOULD,,, WITH
GOD'S PEOPLE.

SAYING THINGS LIKE;

*WELL,,, WE HAD FAMILY,,, OR FRIENDS COMING
OVER,,, OR VISITING FROM OUT OF TOWN,,, SO WE
COULDN'T MAKE MASS.*

SO,, WHY NOT SAY SOMETHING LIKE THIS,,, TO THEM;
*“WE'RE GOING TO MASS,,, WANT TO COME ALONG? IF
NOT,,, WE'LL SEE YOU WHEN WE GET BACK”.*

THEN JESUS SAID: *LET THE DEAD,,, BURY THIER DEAD.
BUT YOU,,, GO AND PROCLAIM THE KINGDOM OF GOD.*

WHEN JESUS SPEAKS OF; **THE DEAD,,, BURYING THE
DEAD**,,, HE'S SPEAKING OF THOSE,,, WHO HAVE NOT
YET HEARD OF HIS LOVE,,, GRACE AND FORGIVENESS
AND WHO ARE SPIRITUALLY DEAD! THEY NEED TO
HEAR HIS GOSPEL AND BE BROUGHT TO LIFE.

SO WE NEED TO DO OUR PART,,, WE NEED TO PICK UP
OUR CROSS AND SHARE JESUS' GRACE,,, LOVE AND
FORGIVENESS,,, WITH THOSE WHO HAVEN'T HEARD
ABOUT IT YET,,, WHICH WILL RESULT IN LIFE
ETERNAL,,, RIGHT NOW,,, FOR THEM.

THEN A SECOND MAN APPROACHED JESUS AND SAID:
*I WILL FOLLOW YOU LORD,,, BUT FIRST,,, LET ME SAY
FAREWELL TO MY FAMILY AT HOME.*

THAT SOUNDS REASONABLE,,, DOESN'T IT?

TO THIS REQUEST,,, JESUS SEEMS TO DELIVER HIS
HARSHEST RESPONSE,,, SAYING; *NO ONE WHO SETS
A HAND TO PLOW AND LOOKS TO WHAT WAS LEFT
BEHIND,,, IS FIT FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD.*

IT'S AS THOUGH JESUS IS SAYING,,,

*MY CALL ON YOUR LIFE IS SO URGENT,,, THAT I DON'T
HAVE TIME TO EXPLAIN IT TO ANYBODY. WHERE I'M
LEADING YOU,,, ON YOUR SPIRITUAL JOURNEY,,, WITH
ME AND MY CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP,,, IS A LIFE LONG
COMMITMENT,,, THAT YOU CANNOT PUT OFF,,, ONCE
YOU HAVE TAKEN IT UP.*

**WE CAN'T MAKE A COMMITMENT,, TO FOLLOW
JESUS,, THEN CHOOSE,, TO REVERT BACK TO OUR
OLD LIFE STYLE,, WHICH WAS FILLED WITH LACK
OF COMMITMENT AND WILLFUL SIN.**

**WE ARE CHRISTIANS,, CHILDREN OF GOD,, CALLED
TO PROCLAIM THE MESSAGE OF THE KINGDOM OF
GOD,, TO THOSE WHO HAVEN'T HEARD IT YET,, AND
WE MUST TO LIVE,, IN THE PRESENCE OF THAT
KINGDOM,, EVERY MOMENT OF EVERY DAY.**

**THE CALL TO BE A COMMITTED DISCIPLE OF JESUS,,
NEVER ENDS. THE REWARDS FOR SERVICE TO JESUS
ARE GREAT AND ALTHOUGH THE DEMANDS FOR
THAT SERVICE CAN BE COSTLY,, WE CAN'T TURN
BACK.**

**MY DEARLY BELOVED,, WE MUST PRESS FORWARD,,
TO THE HIGHER CALLING OF GOD,, BY
PROCLAIMING GOD'S GRACE,, TO THOSE AROUND
US,, WHO ARE SPIRITUALLY DEAD,, THAT THEY
MIGHT HAVE A NEWNESS OF LIFE IN CHRIST JESUS,,
LIKE WE DO!**

***I BLESS YOU ALL,,
IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER
AND THE SON
AND THE HOLY SPIRIT***

+++ AMEN+++

(1,433) WDS,, 6 PGS