

and the searching, critical eyes were too much for him and he came up short. Two weeks later, Morgan's name appeared among the 105 REJECTED for the ministry that year.

Jill Morgan, his daughter-in-law, wrote in her book, *A Man of the Word*, "He wired to his father the one word, 'Rejected,' and sat down to write in his diary: 'Very dark everything seems. Still, He knoweth best.' Quickly came the reply: 'Rejected on earth. Accepted in heaven. Dad.'"

I wonder if that is what Jesus constantly heard? I wonder if that is not what we need to hear when ever we feel rejected. We follow the one who was despised and rejected.

The writer of Hebrews puts it this way:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off every encumbrance and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with endurance the race set out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.



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The Uncommitted One

Luke 9:51-62

TRINITY PULPIT



In our text today, we find Jesus encountering those who we might put in the uncommitted category. As Jesus is attempting to pass through Samaria to Jerusalem, He and His disciples will encounter those who are uncommitted or at least religious in other ways than Jesus and His disciples. Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem. Luke 9 serves as a rejection story. His own in Nazareth has rejected Jesus and the Samaritans will reject Jesus as well. Luke is painting us a picture of Jesus' ministry. Although many embraced Him, many rejected Him. Ultimately, on the cross we get the picture that the world has rejected Him.

We must always remember that when we feel rejected, because of Jesus we are in good company. Our Lord Jesus was rejected.

As Jesus is attempting to pass through Samaria to Jerusalem, He encounters some resistance. If you were a Galilean and you wanted to go to Jerusalem the quickest route was through Samaria. However, with the animosity between the Jews and Samaritans, many Jewish pilgrims would just take the long way around. Now we know Jesus is not afraid to go where others choose not to go. Jesus is not afraid to encounter those who many other "good religious Jewish people of His day" would avoid. This is true whether it was the class of people that were referred to as sinners or whether it was people of a different race and religion. Jesus is seeking to go through Samaria to Jerusalem. The trip usually took about three days. So, Jesus sends ahead some disciples to make arrangements for their travel. They didn't have TripAdvisor or Expedia. You had to go in person to make arrangements. However, when the messengers arrived, they found that the Samaritan Village was inhospitable. They would not welcome Him because He was going to Jerusalem.

The animosity between the Samaritans and the Jews is hard to compare, but the Samaritans did not like the Galileans traveling through their territory, especially if they were on their way to Jerusalem for a religious festival. The disciples discover that this particular village would not accept them. The response of James and John

is priceless. When James and John see they are not accepted, they look at Jesus and say "Lord do you want us to call down fire from heaven and destroy them?"

James and John, who Jesus would nickname "Sons of Thunder", live up to their reputation in this passage. Upset that they would be treated this way and that this Samaritan Village would treat Jesus this way, they concluded it is time to teach them a lesson. Now what is humorous about this whole response is that as far as we know, James and John don't have the power to call down fire from heaven. As much as they want to be able to exact revenge and teach the people from the village a lesson, they do not possess the ability. That is why they asked Jesus. They may be hoping this might be the moment that Jesus would give them some power they had not possessed before. Maybe in a moment of rejection... Jesus will forget all of this, turn the other cheek, and pray and forgive your enemies nonsense. Then, finally let the people who rejected Him have what is coming to them. How John and James hoped so; and they desperately wanted to be apart of the fire works.

How many times do we feel rejected by others? How many times do we feel rejected by a changing culture? How many times do we get angry at the response of others toward Jesus? If Jesus would just give me the green light, I could call down fire from heaven and destroy them. I'd like to teach them a lesson.

Now, it is important to know that James and John thought they were responding correctly. In fact, they had a Biblical precedent. Elijah had called down fire from heaven to consume Ahaziah's soldiers in two occasions. James and John think they have that right. If Elijah dealt with his enemies that way, then that is the way we are to deal with enemies.

You know... we can have the right Bible verse and the wrong spirit. We can have the weight of scripture on our side and still miss the mark. Jesus would say of the Pharisees "you search the scriptures because there you think you have eternal life, but these very scriptures point to me." John 5:39. Jesus' point, of course, is that

knowing the Bible is not the same thing as knowing God. James and John had scripture on their side, but they lacked the Spirit of Jesus.

Jesus' response is not to simply roll His eyes at His impetuous disciples. In fact, He rebuked them. Now it is important for us to understand this word. This is not a simple reprimand. It is not saying that Jesus was disappointed in them and shook His head in disappointment. Jesus rebuked them.

The use of rebuke was rarely for disciples. It is used to describe Jesus' response to demons, the devil, and disease. It is interesting that in the NIV and other more modern translations there is a phrase that is omitted from translation. In the King James Version and some other older translations you will find verse 55 reading something like:

But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. (Luke 9:55 KJV)

There is a long argument of why some translations omit this phrase and others include it. It has much to do with the copies of the texts that we possess and many modern scholars believe that this was not original but added to the text. That might be the case, but the truth is... the phrase whether original or added to the text gets to the heart of the matter. Jesus is saying to James and John, the attitude you have toward those who have rejected us is not of God. That is not what I have told you. You do not know the manner of spirit you are of. In other words, just as Jesus rebuked Peter and said get behind me Satan, Jesus is saying to James and John this revengeful, angry and retaliation spirit is not from God. That is the work of Satan.

John Gill was one of the first writing Baptist Theologians in England in the 1700s. In his commentary on the Bible, Gill writes concerning this verse:

(Speaking of Jesus) He turned himself about to them, and looking upon them with a stern countenance, sharply reprov'd them for their intemperate zeal, their passion of wrath, and anger, and desire of revenge: and said, ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; or do not consider that this is not the true spirit of zeal, but of anger and revenge; and is not agreeable to the spirit of the meek and humble followers of Christ, or to the Spirit of God, and those gifts of his bestowed on them, nor to the spirit of the Gospel dispensation: so good men, for want of attention, may not know sometimes from what spirit they act; taking that for a good one, which is a very bad one; being covered with specious pretenses of love and zeal, and the examples of former saints; not observing the difference of persons; times, and things. (John Gill)

We are told then, that they went to another village. They did not go around Samaria. They did not decide to forget

these Samaritans. They simply went to another village where they were accepted and found hospitality.

This is such a timely story for our culture. In a day when those who believe like we do, practice faith like we do, see the world like we do is in decline... what are we to do? How are we to respond to the uncommitted one?

I know how I am tempted to respond. I am tempted to respond with anger. Many days when I read a newspaper or magazine article, or social media post ... I can feel it happening with in me. I can feel that sense of rejection begin to well up within my heart. I can feel my blood pressure rise. I can hear those words coming into my mind and feel the strain of trying to keep them coming from my mind to my lips. I can feel the temptation to respond either by speaking or writing some response. Because we now live in a world where we are convinced that everyone wants to know our opinion on everything, we think it is always right to respond. Too many times of course we do this without truly thinking about our response. We do not take into consideration how our response might be received and worse yet, how it might hinder the gospel. I know that I am tempted everyday to "call down fire from heaven" only if I could. Do you know that feeling?

If we could only call down fire from heaven or at least from our keyboards or in our language. However, we don't have that power. We think we do, but the truth is when we act as though we have that power from heaven all we really do is set loose the power of hell. We cannot be trusted with vengeance. Jesus said, "Vengeance is mind thus sayeth the Lord." Thank God it belongs to God and not to us. If it did really belong to us, then we would destroy everything including ourselves.

I know how I want to respond to the one who rejects Jesus and in turn rejects me. However, in our best of moments we understand that this is not the spirit of Christ.

What is the reaction of Jesus?

First, there is the acknowledgement that not everyone will accept Him. Note what Jesus does not do in this moment. He does not go into the village and begin to perform miracles as to convince the people to receive Him. In fact, in villages where there was rejection like His own village of Nazareth we are told Jesus was not able to perform as many miracles because of their lack of faith. Jesus is not one to force His way upon you. Jesus is not one who is going to make you act this way or believe this way. Instead of trying to force His way upon this village, He simply moves on.

There is sadness in this story. It is the sadness that is not expressed. It is the sadness that the people of this village could have accepted Jesus, but instead Jesus passes them by. How sad that so many miss what Jesus can do for

their lives simply because they are not open. They are not open because of their own worldview. The Samaritans reject Jesus because He is on His way to Jerusalem. They were at odds with Jews and they did not want Jews in their town especially those on their way to Jerusalem for the festival. This animosity that had been passed down for centuries blinded this village from what was right at their doorstep... the very Son of God. Who knows what Jesus could have done in that village if they would have been able to receive Him. However out of their own animosity and hatred, which they had learned, caused them to miss out. Jesus passed them by.

Jesus however does not rebuke them. He simply knows that rejection is a part of life. So, He moves on. He moves on to another village. It is interesting that this is exactly what Jesus tells His disciples to do when He sends them out. He tells them that if a place will not accept them, they are to shake the dust off their feet and move on. Not everyone will accept the gospel message. Not everyone is going to view the world like we do. Jesus simply moves on to a village that accepts Him and offers hospitality.

Here is another important point in Jesus' response. Jesus does not give up on all Samaritans as a result of this rejection. Jesus does not lump everyone together into a group. He goes to another Samaritan village. These Samaritans also have been taught about the conflict between the Jews and the Samaritans, but in this village there is openness to Jesus. Luke's gospel has several instances where Jesus, through actions and words, shows His love to the Samaritans who were regarded as enemies. If we notice, the stories of Jesus and the Samaritans are very personal. There is the woman at the well who was a Samaritan and is surprised Jesus is speaking to her. When Jesus heals the 10 lepers it is only the Samaritan who returns and gives thanks. When Jesus is making a point about loving your neighbor, He tells a story and He makes the Samaritan the hero. These passages remind us that people are people. Jesus does not reject Samaritans because a few in a Samaritan village have rejected Him. What does He do? He goes to another Samaritan Village.

Jesus love is too strong to let the rejection of a few keep Him from loving others. He does not get so aggravated with these Samaritan people that He lumps them all into one category and gives up on the whole race. Jesus sees people not Samaritans.

Do you know the two times when everyone on the earth is placed into the same category in the Bible? Here are the two instances. "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." We are all lumped into one group by God. We have all sinned. Everyone who has ever lived with the exception of Jesus stands in need of God's forgiveness. Here is the second time we are all placed in the same category in the Bible. For God so loved the world that He gave His only son that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life. As that old hymn says "whosoever surely meaneth me." All have sinned, all are loved and Christ died for us all. One village rejects Jesus and so He goes to the next.

The last response I want us to consider is that Jesus was so confident of His mission and the calling of God that rejection did not deter Him. Dr. Kenneth Samuel writes in a sermon on this text "Only people who are confident and secure enough in themselves to be who they are can allow others to be who they are without retaliation and without resentment. Jesus was so secure and so confident in Himself that He could tolerate and still love those who rejected Him."

SOMETIMES WHEN WE ARE REJECTED, OR OUR FAITH IS REJECTED BY ANOTHER, WE STRUGGLE BECAUSE IT CAUSES US TO DOUBT AND BE UNSURE. SOMETIMES WE STRUGGLE BECAUSE WE ARE UNCERTAIN AND OTHERS CALL THAT UNCERTAINTY FROM US. HOWEVER, WHEN WE MATURE AS A CHRISTIAN TO THE PLACE WHERE WE KEEP OUR EYES ON THE CROSS AND WE ARE CERTAIN OF GOD'S FAITHFULNESS, THEN WE TOO HAVE THE STRENGTH TO HANDLE REJECTION LIKE JESUS.

Jesus, we are told, was on His way to Jerusalem. Some translations say, "He turned His face toward Jerusalem." Indicating that this was a moment of resolution and determination to stay focused on the mission to which God had sent Him and called Him. Jesus was so focused on the cross and so sure of God's faithfulness that He could handle rejection.

Here is a hard truth for us to consider. Sometimes when we are rejected, or our faith is rejected by another, we struggle because it causes us to doubt and be unsure. Sometimes we struggle because we are uncertain and others call that uncertainty from us. However, when we mature as a Christian to the place where we keep our eyes on the cross and we are certain of God's faithfulness, then we too have the strength to handle rejection like Jesus.

Campbell Morgan was one of England's great preachers and Bible scholars. He was also one of 150 young men who sought entrance to the Wesleyan ministry in 1888. He passed the doctrinal examinations, but then faced the trial sermon. In a cavernous auditorium that could seat more than 1,000 sat three ministers and 75 others who came to listen. When Morgan stepped into the pulpit, the vast room