

**“Be Willing To Let Go”**  
Message by DD Adams  
Providence United Methodist Church  
6<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost  
June 26, 2016

The gospel lesson is taken from the book of Luke, chapter 9, verses 51 through 62. I'll be reading from the *Common English Bible*. As the time approached when Jesus was to be taken up into heaven, he determined to go to Jerusalem. He sent messengers on ahead of him. Along the way, they entered a Samaritan village to prepare for his arrival, but the Samaritan villagers refused to welcome him because he was determined to go to Jerusalem.

When the disciples James and John saw this, they said, “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to consume them?” But Jesus turned and spoke sternly to them, and they went on to another village. As Jesus and his disciples traveled along the road, someone said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.” Jesus replied, “Foxes have dens and the birds in the sky have nests, but the Human One has no place to lay his head.”

Then Jesus said to someone else, “Follow me.” He replied, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.” Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead. But you go and spread the news of God’s kingdom.” Someone else said to Jesus, “I will follow you, Lord, but first let me say good-bye to those in my house.” Jesus said to him, “No one who puts a hand on the plow and looks back is fit for God’s kingdom.” This is God’s word for God’s people. Thanks be to God.

Let’s pray. Lord Jesus, one who shapes us into disciples as we follow fixing our attention on you. Work in our hearts, and make the soil soft, and fine, and fertile. Pull the weeds that strangle our indifference to commit fully. Nourish and cultivate our hearts and minds to do as you’ve asked. Let the words of my mouth

and the mediation of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

Peace be with you! When I was doing my internship in seminary my pastor told me I was a planner. I had my life agenda planned and my ducks in a row. I really didn't want to do more than just "dabble" in ministry. So, before graduating, we bought a log home in Pa., and Dan looked for a job in that area, but nothing ever materialized. We wanted to move as soon as possible because I had my eye on a little ¼ time church down over the mountain in a small rural community.

After graduating, a District Superintendent offered me a church. She said it was a full-time appointment in central MD., but that's all she would tell me. I had 24 hours to decide. Dan said, "Well, no job materialized in Pa., so let's have you take the position." I had the thought more than once that I wasn't planning this life event. So we went.

We weren't expecting this change of direction. I thought to myself, "Gee, it's almost like Jesus made plans for us before we made our own." I felt a little uncomfortable, especially because we were planning to have my parents live with us, and we'd already had the plans drawn up. Jesus didn't seem to wait on us, he just went ahead and made plans for us. I felt rather out of control, but all the time Jesus was right beside us.

Being a planner and a prayer, I like to know exactly what the next thing will be, and I get a little strung out if things don't happen the way I thought they would. Quite often my internship pastor told me I was inflexible, but I was doing the best I could. I was going along with this risky move to some place called "Kemptown."

Along life's journey, we devote a lot of time, money, and effort attempting to stay in control of what we think we control. We make decisions, they may not

be God's perfect will for our lives, but God has this way of getting out of us what needs to happen.

We have detours in the journey, disappoints, and suffering along the way. But one thing is certain, we begin to see we're not controlling much of anything in our lives. And that's exactly where God wants us to be, despite what anyone else is saying, God wants a broken and surrendered heart that follows him.

So maybe a disciple's calling is simply to relax, trust, and to be *willing* to let go of their plans—to pray and follow God's leading. Maybe God doesn't want us to be in control and to understand that being in control is nothing but an illusion anyway? We know the Holy Spirit is called alongside to help and lead. Now, let's take a look at the direction Jesus and his disciples were going in Luke 8. Jesus had already turned his face determinedly toward Jerusalem as verse 51 states. He knew he was moving toward a cross, and along the way, he's hoping he finds some who are willing to follow him.

Jesus meets with a number of people that have reactions to his invitation to follow. The first is the Samaritans. The passage isn't completely clear, but they seem to have expectations of Jesus, and being certain he won't fulfill them, they reject him.

A little further down the road someone says to Jesus, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus replies, "Foxes have dens and the birds in the sky have nests, but the Human One has no place to lay his head." Maybe this person didn't like the idea of not having a place to call his own. Then there was another who said he had to bury his father and another said he needed to say good-bye to those he lived with.

Jesus doesn't respond positively to any of them and says, "No one who puts a hand on the plow and looks back is fit for God's kingdom." Christian disciples

are forward leaning, to look back only postpones, and more than likely, the decision to follow never becomes a reality at all. Jesus expects us to drop our plans and follow him.

Becoming a disciple is a process. Sure there are those who drop everything and follow, but all of us are changed as we mature spiritually. God works detours in the plans of our lives. Our decisions aren't always what God would like. It's like watching a garden grow. God, the caretaker of the vineyard is patient and waits for us, pruning and disciplining all along the way. We plant and water, but God gives the growth. We plan our way, but God directs our steps. The aim is to learn to trust more and more and to *be willing* to let go of our plans.

Jesus insists that his mission for us to become a disciple must come before our plans. Are we willing to let go of our plans? As a church, we're to let go of our past successes and hear what God is calling us to do today. Christ challenges us to be willing to let go by evaluating the priorities in our lives and dare to follow a new course. He's already thrown himself fully into our lives. Let's be willing to yield and allow Jesus to take control.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father full of love, we respond to you from our heart of hearts. We invite you to take control. Teach us to let go, to plan, and to pray, but to give you the wheel. Amen.