

Priorities
Luke 9:51-62

Have you been driving down the road and seen a car slowly drifting out of its lane, and then make a quick correction? It is a bit concerning if the car is traveling away from you. It is downright scary if it coming right at you.

It makes me wonder what's going on with the driver. Is the person having trouble staying awake? I will often see the person's head moving up and down. But it is usually not jerk associated with sudden alertness. It is the more rhythmic motion of someone doing something very important on their phone.

Jesus addresses this very serious issue in our text.

Is that possible? Cell phones weren't even invented until I was in my twenties, how could Jesus talk about distracted driving? I will assert that He truly does speak to distracted driving – within the context of distracted discipleship.

Distracted discipleship is the broad offense that Jesus brings to light in our reading from Luke. Three different people say, “Yes, I will be your disciple, Jesus!” However, each one of them has a big but. It is not from eating too many donuts. It is from being distracted. Each one's attention is drawn away from Jesus to something very important.

As they were going along the road, someone said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.” And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head.” We aren't told the man's reaction, but I can visualize his head swiveling back and forth between Jesus and the things that give him a sense of security. What kind of a disciple would he be?

One like you. One with a big but. “Yes, Jesus is Lord of all creation and He loves me dearly ... but will He really take care of me and provide all I need?” Worry and doubt distract you from Jesus. You give Him your heart but you give a little less in the offering plate because you're just not sure you can truly trust Him to take care of you.

To another he said, “Follow me.” But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” And Jesus said to him, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” That's sounds a bit harsh, doesn't it? Why? Because we have big but's. We have other responsibilities and other things we want to do. “But, Jesus, I need to work this Sunday morning.” “But, Jesus, my team is counting on me to be there this Sunday morning” “But, Jesus, I'm really tired and would probably fall asleep in church, so can't I just stay home and stay in bed?”

Yet another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home." Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God." First ... Who is first? Is it Jesus? Or is it you and your priorities?

Distracted driving is a clear violation of the Fifth Commandment. Martin Luther explains this word of God this way: "We should fear and love God so that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, but help and support him in every physical need." Distracted driving is about you and your priorities. It is not about your neighbor. A Google search revealed the number 3,142 as the number of people who died on US highways in 2020 as a direct result of texting while driving.

Who is first? Jesus? Your neighbor? Or is it you? ... If you are first it is a big problem. You are not *fit for the kingdom of God*.

However, there is a big but. If you put yourself first, which you often do, it is a grave sin. It will lead to death and a grave. You are not *fit for the kingdom of God*.

But, if Jesus puts you first, (Which He has!) it is a great thing! Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem. He wasn't going there so He wouldn't miss the big game. He wasn't going there for a nice vacation so He could rest and relax. He was going there to suffer and die ... for you! Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem to be arrested,

to have His back bloodied by a whip, to have a crown of thorns crushed onto His head, to have nails driven into His hands and feet, to hang on a cross held in place by those nails until He died.

But, it wasn't really the nails that held Him there. It was His love for you. He was fulfilling His Father's plan to redeem you – to pay the price for your sin and make you fit for the kingdom of God.

Jesus set His face. Jesus put you first. And there you remain. Are there any big butts? No, and no little ones either. There are no sins you have committed that are not covered by Jesus' blood. There is nothing that can separate you from the love of God that is yours in Christ Jesus. There are no butts. Jesus died on the cross for you to earn for you the forgiveness of all your sins. No butts. Jesus rose from the grave to give you the hope of your own resurrection and life eternal with Him and those you love who have gone before you in the faith. No butts. Jesus has put you first – and there you remain – completely fit for the kingdom of God. Amen.