

We've been working our way through Luke—having finished the 14th chapter so far
I want to pause and look at the context

We are right in the middle of what is called the "travel narrative"—Luke 9:51-19:48
1:1-9:50 – Prolog, infancy narratives, and Galilean ministry
9:51-19:48 – The "travel narrative"
20:1-24:53 – The passion and resurrection

Luke 9:51 - When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.
13:22-Jesus went through one town and village after another, teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem
Luke 17:11 - On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee.
Luke 18:31 - Then he took the twelve aside and said to them, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem...
Luke 19:11 - ...because he was near Jerusalem...
Luke 19:28 - After he had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

In Luke 19:28, Jesus finally arrives in Jerusalem for the triumphant entry
Moreover, much of this material is unique to Luke, especially in this same context

In the beginning it sounds like Jesus is going to Jerusalem

Especially when reading verses from Luke 9:51 and 52 together
When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. And he sent messengers ahead of him... Luke 9:51-52 NRSV

But we find out that he has lots of interruptions to his travels
Also that his route is anything but direct

In fact, in 10:38 Jesus visits Mary and Martha who live in Bethany
Which is on the outskirts of Jerusalem

A closer look indicates that he is criss-crossing the countryside in his travels

Some have suggested that Luke did not know his geography—but that doesn't make sense

Rather this highlights a new section or phase of Jesus' ministry
Jesus is generally moving away from his ministry in Galilee, which is in the north
Much of his teaching is directed towards the disciples
He persistently and intentionally criticizes the Pharisees and religious rulers
Jesus is generally moving towards Jerusalem
Both literally and figuratively

Jesus begins teaching his disciples about what is coming next

He reiterates the call to follow him—but he tells them that it will be costly
Doing the work of Jesus will cost everything—it even cost Jesus his life
Jesus teaches about the Kingdom of God—and calls us to live as full citizens of the Kingdom
Jesus gives the disciples the power and authority of the Kingdom of God—sending them out
Jesus teaches through parables—many of them are pointed in their critique of the status quo
Jesus expands the Kingdom to include those previously excluded from the Jewish religion

But at the same time he is resolute in his movement towards Jerusalem

He does this in 2 ways

1. By persisting in following his calling to serve people not rules
He consistently does those things which bring political ill will against him
He healed on the Sabbath, ate with sinners, tax collectors, and the outcast
He criticized the established religion and the wealthy domination of the poor

He talked with Samaritans and Gentiles
He touched the lepers even though he was considered unclean
He purged the temple
He called God his Father and forgave the sins of people
He drew large crowds wherever he went—seen as potential followers of a rebellion
Jesus was a threat to the false sense of peace in Palestine, so a threat to the Romans
Death on the cross was the natural political action against such actions
Jesus was very aware that his actions would precipitate such political execution

2. By talking about what is coming—he speaks about suffering which will come to him
He says the Son of Man will be killed and on the third day be raised—3 times

Luke 9:21-22

Luke 9:43-45

Luke 18:31-34

It is clear that Jesus knows what will happen
His actions are taken as political manipulation against the establishment
While persisting, he knows it will be his undoing
Interesting that the 1st and 3rd times, he predicts his resurrection
Also noted that the disciples do not grasp the implication of this
It isn't until later as events unfold that they begin to understand
I think that is true for many of us—things don't make sense
Somehow we have a sense of things but shove it away
Then later, things fall into place and we see the whole
We're given to know so that when it is time, we understand

He says that followers of Jesus are to take up their cross daily and follow him
As we've said, this business of following Jesus is costly
We too will suffer the consequences of doing Jesus' work
Yet, we are invited to persist, both in the difficult and the glorious

As Easter is just 3 weeks away, it seems appropriate that we too, set our faces towards Jerusalem
That we take time in this next 3 weeks to anticipate the death and resurrection of Jesus
That we count the cost of following Jesus
That we consider the meaning of dying with Jesus and rising again

Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

Romans 6:4-5 NRSV

In the meantime—while Jesus is moving "towards Jerusalem" he is also faithful to the present call
He faithfully persists in living out his call to show people the face of God
At every "interruption" he is completely present to those with whom he talks and ministers

Easter changes everything for us—evil is trumped by the Living Son of God who rises from death
Yet, while we focus on where we are going, we live faithfully each day as it comes
Present to Jesus and present to those around us—always Listening for God's promptings
Always ready to follow Jesus no matter the cost or consequences