

**Life in the Kingdom**  
**by Rev. Frances Savill**  
**Sunday January 1, 2023**

**Luke 9:43b-10:12**

This morning we begin a new year, and we continue with Luke's account of Jesus' life and teaching.

We are in the third section of the gospel, where Jesus has turned his face towards Jerusalem. But it is going to be Chapter 22 until he arrives there.

This long section, Jesus is teaching, and many of the foundational and memorial passages of scripture are in this section.

And just so we don't forget, the gospel writer is going to remind us again and again that Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem to die. That is the backdrop, and foundation to all that is happening.

In this section we have Jesus going from town to town, village to village teaching about The Kingdom of God, and in his actions and in his teachings, he tells us what it means to be part of the kingdom.

I'd like to share a video from the Bible Project about The Kingdom of God, that I hope will give us an overview of Jesus' teachings and will help to bring our passage from today into context and focus.

<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/gospel-kingdom/>

So, who is the greatest in the kingdom?

If Jesus walked into our congregation and met all of us, who would Jesus say is the greatest? The one who receives children in Jesus' name, the one who is the least, the one who serves others, those are the great ones.

In the church, we ask people to give and to serve, and when they are really good at it, we ask them to mentor others. Then we ask them to step aside and make room for others to serve. There is downward mobility for us who serve Jesus. At each step we are asked to give more, sacrifice our own preferences, and care for and support others.

And then in verses 49 and following there are people who the disciples want to reject, and a village of Samaritans that they want to destroy. But Jesus rebukes the disciples.

Jesus loves his enemies, and he prays for those who reject him.

But then there is an interesting contrast at the end of chapter 9. There are people who want to follow Jesus, but they want to follow Jesus after they have things in order.

They want to follow but... And Jesus won't have any of it.

There isn't following Jesus and putting your family first.

There isn't Jesus and putting the law or other of your own requirements first.

There isn't Jesus and anything else.

There is following Jesus. No one is excluded from following Jesus.

But following Jesus is a whole commitment of your life.

Jesus wants your whole self, your whole life, no backwards glances, no putting things off, the Kingdom of God has drawn near to us, and we are invited to follow Jesus now.

Seventy-two were appointed and sent out to every town and place where Jesus was about to go. The mission of our Lord has always been shared.

He has always called us to share the good news and be agents of it in the world.

And those who are appointed by Jesus aren't glorified, they don't receive fame or fortune. Jesus describes them as sheep among wolves.

But he also tells them that the harvest is plentiful. Those who receive the disciples receive Jesus. Those who reject the disciples reject Jesus.

The disciples are not taught to argue or browbeat, but they are taught to bring healing and proclaim the message – the two things go hand and hand.

The Kingdom of God has drawn near.

And then there is the warning against towns and people who turn away from Jesus and the good news. Jesus warns that for them it will mean judgment.

It's not that Jesus is going to rain fire down on their heads.

We've seen that when the Samaritan village rejects Jesus, he doesn't want them to be destroyed. But when you reject life, and continue to choose death, there is no hope. You bring death and judgment down on yourself.

When the seventy-two return, they rejoice because they had power in Jesus' name. Jesus isn't too impressed with them and their power. Jesus' focus is that they have life in his name, and they blessed and shared life with others. The gospel, following Jesus, learning to do life according to the Kingdom of God, brings life.

Back to the part where people want to follow Jesus but... something else comes first. It's not that Jesus has something against families or the Law or caring for others. It's the exact opposite. Caring for others, caring for our families, following the other commands of God find their proper place when we follow Jesus first. Then everything else finds its place.

A couple of questions you might reflect on at the beginning of this new year...  
*What does it look like for you to follow Jesus this new year, and what might Jesus be calling you to do to serve His kingdom?*

*How are you living your citizenship in The Kingdom of God, is Jesus calling you to do anything differently?*

*How are you serving? Who are you serving?  
Is that part of taking up your cross and following Jesus?*

### **Prayer:**

Gracious God, there is no one excluded from your call to enter the Kingdom, but life in your name is different, and following you changes us and makes us different. You call us to serve, to give, to take up our crosses and follow you. Show us what that means today. Amen.

### **Luke 9:43-62**

<sup>43</sup> And all were astonished at the majesty of God.

But while they were all marveling at everything he was doing, Jesus said to his disciples, <sup>44</sup> "Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men." <sup>45</sup> But they did not understand this saying, and it was concealed from them, so that they might not perceive it. And they were afraid to ask him about this saying.

<sup>46</sup> An argument arose among them as to which of them was the greatest. <sup>47</sup> But Jesus, knowing the reasoning of their hearts, took a child and put him by his side <sup>48</sup> and said to them, "Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and

whoever receives me receives him who sent me. For he who is least among you all is the one who is great." <sup>49</sup> John answered, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he does not follow with us." <sup>50</sup> But Jesus said to him, "Do not stop him, for the one who is not against you is for you." <sup>51</sup> When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. <sup>52</sup> And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him. <sup>53</sup> But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. <sup>54</sup> And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" <sup>55</sup> But he turned and rebuked them. <sup>56</sup> And they went on to another village.

<sup>57</sup> As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." <sup>58</sup> 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." <sup>59</sup> To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." <sup>60</sup> And Jesus said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." <sup>61</sup> Yet another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home." <sup>62</sup> Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

### **Luke 10:1-12**

<sup>1</sup> After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go.

<sup>2</sup> And he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. <sup>3</sup> Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. <sup>4</sup> Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road. <sup>5</sup> Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house!' <sup>6</sup> And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. <sup>7</sup> And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house. <sup>8</sup> Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. <sup>9</sup> Heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' <sup>10</sup> But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, <sup>11</sup> 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near.' <sup>12</sup> I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town. *This is the Word of the Lord.*