## What does commitment look like

## c-c-13 Sunday of OT 2022

In the first reading Elisha does something very odd when Elijah calls him.

He takes the plough that he has been ploughing with, breaks it up,

cooks the oxen he has been ploughing with, and serves them to his neighbours

Why? He could have sold them and given the money to the poor,

but he wants to make a public statement.

Elisha wants to make it very clear that he has committed himself to the life of a prophet.

Without a team of oxen, and with any farming equipment,

he has no way to return to farming.

In a sense he has no "plan B."

We are entering summer, which is traditionally the wedding season.

When couples get married, they have to leave their old life behind.

If one or both continue behaving as they did before the marriage,

you can be sure that the marriage will end up on the rocks.

But if both, burn their ploughs, and roast their oxen, so to speak,

symbolic of leaving their old life behind,

and start out on a new adventure together,

they will indeed have a long, joyful life together.

But it is not just prophets or married couples that need to leave their old life behind,

when we commit to the Lord, we need to commit wholeheartedly.

We need to leave our old life behind.

Remember what Jesus said, new wine will not fit into old wineskins.

If you try to reuse the old wineskins they will burst.

If we try and fit our new life with Christ, into our old life without Christ,

all that will happen is that we will end up bursting...it simply cannot be done.

Jesus alludes to this in the gospel, when he responds to the three people who want to follow him.

but have something to do first.

Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests;

but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."

In other words leave everything, and totally rely on God.

"Let the dead bury their own dead."

In other words don't wait to fulfill all your family commitments,

the time to be a disciple is now.

And three, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back

is fit for the kingdom of God."

In other words, anyone who follows Christ, cannot look back,

nor can they have second thoughts about what they are doing.

In short, obedience to the call and the gift of the kingdom must take precedence over everything.

Our conversion, like Elisha's conversion must be total and complete.

Jesus knows we all have various commitments.

Among all those commitments is our commitment to Christ.

The commitment we have towards him must take priority over all other commitments.

In this gospel Jesus is talking about the commitment that is demanded of his disciples.

Now I need to make a footnote.

While Jesus' words have a radical edge that must not be blunted,

if all Christians everywhere were to live this teaching literally,

we would constitute a family of happy, penniless, and homeless people,

surrounded by decomposing loved ones!

There is no dignity in poverty and most people who are poor,

while they can be rich in human values, do not want to stay poor.

What they deserve, and what all Christians should want, is economic and social justice.

But it is not just about money.

We are called to detach ourselves from memories,

which can be cluttered with anger and revenge;

from the demands of work,

which keep us from being with the ones we love;

and to be generous with our time, hospitality and compassion.

To appreciate what Jesus is talking about...the image he uses is a plough drawn by an ox.

I have talked to enough farmers to know that it is important to plough in a straight line.

If the farmer wishes to plough a straight furrow,

he must give his undivided attention and look ahead to what he is doing.

If he keeps looking back, he will not do a good job.

Having said that,

I must also say that we are called to mediate on the conflicts

that arise when our various commitments come into conflict.

Although committed to Christ we all have family responsibilities: children to raise,

elderly parents to take care of.

What does discipleship require of us, after all we must earn a living.

I don't think Jesus is asking everyone to leave their place of employment,

otherwise we would be penniless, and homeless.

But our commitment must be radical.

We cannot waste our time on revenge no matter how justified we think we might be.

We cannot daydream about glory,

we need to face the harshness of the path of Christ in an unloving world.

We cannot become committed to a way of life that kills the spirit,

and cloak it in a noble sounding language.

Because ultimately our decisions are meant to set us free.

This is what St. Paul was getting at in the second reading. He weighs into the discussion.

He notes that Christ has set us free.

Therefore stand firm, and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery.

The implication is that prior to committing ourselves to Christ, we were slaves.

Admittedly, we would not call ourselves slaves,

but if we are focused on a material, emotional, or psychological point, we are a slave to that idea

If we are focused and committed to Christ,

and, Love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, body and soul,

and we love our neighbour as ourselves,

we are not a slave to an idea, we have been set free to live as we were created to live.

I am not saying that the road to freedom is easy.

Jesus lived the freest life that anyone ever lived,

but the goal of his life was not just to give us an example,

the goal of his life was to be "taken up."

Ascension can only be reached by walking the road that leads to death and resurrection.

This is the road he had to travel, and it is also the road we must travel,

so that we can also be "taken up."

Unfortunately along this road we will experience rejection.

Just as Jesus experience rejection in the Samaritan village.

But we cannot react to rejection in the same way as James and John—with more rejection.

We must react to rejection with love and compassion.

Remember Jesus' command, "Love your enemies."

(M) To all the families who are baptizing their children.

Your will be the task of teaching your children what it means to follow Christ.

The easy path is not always the best path.

Baptism starts your children on the journey. But it is only a beginning.

Your role as a parent does not stop until you have taken your last breath.

May God help you as you strive to teach your children the ways of the faith.