

## Sermon for June 26, 2016 "Don't Make Yourself at Home"

Luke 9:51-62

"Make yourself at home." I like those words. Especially after a long journey. It is good to be able to put my feet up and make myself comfortable. To rest my feet and relax.

"Make yourself at home" That's what you say when you want someone to make themselves comfortable. It is the polite and thoughtful thing to say to someone who has been on a journey. It says, "Relax, and stop your wandering for a while." It invites a person to stay where they are so that you can visit with them.

What if you came to someone's house and they said, "Don't make yourself at home." We would all be taken aback. "What a mean thing to say" we would think. Some of us would even tell the ungracious host that very fact. Such a statement would be an insult. "Don't make yourself at home" seems like something you might say to an enemy. That statement says "I don't want you to stay here. So don't relax, just keep moving."

Don't make yourself at home. That is basically what Jesus told those who wanted to follow him. Someone came to Jesus saying that they wanted to become one of his followers. We think Jesus should have welcomed this person. Jesus should have said, "Oh that is so kind of you to offer yourself like that." Just make yourself at home. Here, sleep on my bed. Are you comfortable? Would you like another pillow?" But Jesus response to these would-be-disciples sounds more like a rebuttal. "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but I have no place to lay my head." Instead of encouraging this follower wan-a-be, Jesus discourages him.

Next Jesus asks some people to become his followers. Evidently he had scared all the volunteers away by telling them about the living condition of a follower. Several of the people respond favorably. One says, "I will follow you, but first let me bury my Father." He simply wants to spend the last few days or years of his father's life with him. But Jesus said, "Let the dead bury the dead." Another says, "I will follow you, just let me go and say a proper good-bye to everyone." A simple enough request, surely Jesus would grant it. Instead Jesus says that people like him, who look back, are not fit for the Kingdom.

Many were and are shocked and troubled by Jesus' response to these prospective followers. They either volunteered themselves or responded positively to Jesus' invitation. Jesus should have encouraged their interest. He should have worked with them. But Jesus didn't make it any easier for them, instead he made it harder. He told them to expect to have no home, not even a pillow if they followed him. He even told them to disregard the family ties that they had. So many rejected Jesus. That's what these passages are about this morning. People rejecting the call to discipleship.

Some people reject Jesus' call to be disciples because they don't want to leave the comfort of home, but there are other reasons? Consider the Samaritans. If you remember they were the ones who told Jesus not to make himself at home. They told him he wasn't welcome because they didn't like where he was going. The Samaritans and the Jews had a lot of religious arguments. And they hated each other because the Jews said God should be worshipped in Jerusalem. But the Samaritans said God should be worshipped in the mountains. Many Jews avoided the Samaritans. If Jews had to get to the other side of Samaria they would go around it rather than go through it. But Jesus went right through it because he loved them. On this occasion Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem to worship. The Samaritans did not believe in going to Jerusalem to worship so they refused to receive Jesus. They didn't like his destination, so they rejected him.

People today do the same thing. They don't agree with what Jesus is doing so they refuse to cooperate. But Christ is on his way to glorify God. Some people don't like Christ's goal of reconciling people to God through forgiveness. They say, "Don't forgive him, he's a murderer. Don't forgive her, she's an adulterer." The people were very upset when they brought the woman caught in the act of adultery to Jesus and he wouldn't let them stone her.

That is what was wrong with the disciples that day. They didn't want to forgive. The Samaritans had rejected them and they were mad. So they said, "Lord condemn those people. Call fire down on them." But Jesus refused. Many people don't like it when Jesus sets out to reconcile people to each other or to God. They want Jesus to rain fire down on them, not heal them. So they refuse Christ's forgiving Spirit a home in their hearts.

"Don't make yourself at home." Those words make me feel uncomfortable. I remember a young man who made me uncomfortable. Like Jesus he had no place to lay his head. I don't remember his name, but we can call him Sam. I met Sam at a soup kitchen. He was a regular there. At night he either stayed at a shelter or on the street. And each day he came for one hot meal at the soup kitchen.

The reason I remember Sam is that he was so much like me. I was a sophomore in college, and he was a young man about twenty. He was interested in astronomy and so was I. In fact I think that is what called him to my attention. One day he was trying to convince one of the volunteers that the earth was closer to the sun in the winter than in the summer. The volunteer said, "No, then why is it hotter in the summer." I informed the volunteer that Sam was right. It's the tilt of the earth that causes the season and in fact the earth is closer to the sun when it is winter in the northern hemisphere. Sam and I talked for a while. And Sam shared with me a list of his accumulated facts about the size of each planet and its distance from the sun. All of it was correct! He knew what he was talking about.

How ironic! Sam knew the precise place of all the planets, yet he had no place to lay his head. How like many people he was? So many know so much, and yet personally they are lost. We can work technological wonders, yet we are emotionally and spiritually homeless. How like me Sam was? I know I have been like that from time to time. Like Sam knowing all the facts but still being personally lost.

Now here's a thought. Maybe that's why Jesus had no place to lay his head. Maybe he chose to leave the comfort of his heavenly home to become homeless because so many of God's children were spiritually homeless. And where would I be if he had not chosen to have no place to lay his head. I would still be spiritually lost, like Sam.

"Don't make yourself at home"- to us that is a call to discipleship. Jesus said the Son of Man has no place to lay his head. And he calls us to choose the same way. Now I'm not telling you to sell the farm and walk the streets of Greenville like a bag lady. I am speaking of being spiritually on the move always. Never resting and making yourselves comfortable.

Discipleship is not an easy life. Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his book The Cost of Discipleship warned us that following Jesus was not easy. He said "Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession.... Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate." Jesus made clear in our lesson today that following him is not cheap and easy. It is a life of constant change. To follow, we will have to count our relationship to Jesus as more important than our family and friends. And sometimes people will reject us because we seek God's will. Sometimes it means showing love to people who make us uncomfortable.

But the benefits are worth it. Followers of Christ cannot make themselves at home during their spiritual journey, but they do have company. God's Son calls us to be spiritually homeless in the world, but he will be homeless with us. And while we are homeless in this world, those who follow Christ will have a home in the next.

"Don't make yourself at home." If you take time to rest spiritually, you will die spiritually. You might as well bury yourself – let the spiritually dead, bury the dead. But if you abandon your home place so that you can follow Jesus, you will have eternal life. Let's move on!