# “Jesus, the salesman”

A Meditation on Luke 9: 51-62

Madison Vaughn Grace Presbyterian Church June 30, 2019

Jesus wears many different hats, but I think it is safe to say that none of those hats include being a good sales-person. He is horrible at it! At the very least a sales-person’s goal is to make their product more appealing, and Jesus does the exact opposite. He is selling rejection, forbearance, inconvenience, hardship, disruption, disorientation, detachment, intensity, and urgency here. These things should never be used in a marketing campaign unless your goal is to scare everyone away. In all reality, though, the life Jesus is calling us towards is scary. It is a life of uncertainty. In fact, Jesus was homeless, and what gives someone the feeling of uncertainty more than being someone who is experiencing homelessness. I know that is a hard fact for us to comprehend, but that’s the truth. Jesus was homeless. He was solely dependent on the kindness and hospitality of others for everything. For food, shelter, the basic human needs that everyone should be guaranteed. Strangers, rather God, provided him with these basic needs. He was a wanderer. Which does not fit the stereotypical viewpoint of him as a clean shaven, Caucasian, attractive, young, man.

We can see a snapshot of Jesus’ everyday life experience of being homeless here in today’s passage from the start. Jesus is on the move, again, be it always, towards Jerusalem, and he is requesting the hospitality of a Samaritan village. He in no way expects them to welcome him in, only asks. They say no, because Jesus and those with him are Jews. You could say Jews are Alabama fans and the Samaritans are Auburn fans. That’s how deep rooted this rivalry is between them. This does not phase him though, he keeps treading forward towards Jerusalem. He brushes off the dust and continues onward. Then we see this pragmatic side of Jesus when he is speaking to possible followers, and this is when the horrible sales-person hat comes on. The first person is excited and energetic to follow Jesus, but Jesus says: “Hold up, I don’t think you really know what you are agreeing to, let me just go ahead and tell you now. You will have no home or the comforts that come with it.” Then the next individual comes up and Jesus asks him to follow him, and the individual says: “Ok, but first let me bury my dad.” Then what does Jesus says? He says: “Let the dead bury their own dead.” Well that was rude! What’s Jesus’ problem with this guy wanting to bury his dad, after all isn’t family important? Yes, family is extremely important, especially back then; however, no family is more important than Jesus or his mission with us in this world. A third person walks up and says: “I will follow but first,”...uh oh…, “Let me say goodbye to my house.” Prepare yourself, Jesus says no again! Why does he keep doing that? What is his goal here? Well, he is stressing the importance of being fully committed. It takes more than just saying you are a Christian and becoming religiously converted or integrated to follow Jesus. It takes a continuous conversion, as described by Donald Gelpi, a Jesuit theologian, or, in other words, an integration of your whole being: emotional, intellectual, moral, and sociopolitical. What does this mean for us though?

Becoming fully integrated within these categories takes a lifetime and is something that we are and should always be striving for. Meaning that we are called to always be conduits of learning new and better ways to be human and to be Christian in this ever changing world that we live in. This is how you achieve wholeness through the help of God, it is a wholeness in purpose. Isn’t that what we are always looking for? Purpose. A meaning to this life we have been given. The first step to this is striving for wholeness through living a life as a fully integrated human and/or Christian. Those words can really be interchangeable in the grand scheme of things.

One piece of this wholeness in integration is that of religious integration. Being religiously integrated is faith in how and what we believe. For us here at Grace Presbyterian, that means that we prescribe to the beliefs of the national Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) denomination, we have designated ourselves as a More Light congregation, and as progressive Christians, among other things. Each of these comes with their own sets of beliefs that we state we agree with. For more information on these various things, please feel free to visit our website at gracetuscaloosa.org. See that’s how to be a good sales-person. Religious integration is important, but it isn’t the whole story.

Being emotionally invested in Christ’s mission is part of our calling, too. This means being in tune with our emotional beings. The good and the bad. Being aware of our positive and negative emotions and having a willingness to be able to process those openly and honestly with ourselves and trusted others is the key. Once we are able to process those in a healthy and safe way, we then can use them to our advantage. An example of this from today’s scripture is when Jesus denies James’ and John’s request to call fire down to consume the Samaritans. Here, Jesus is allowing his emotions of love rule over those of rejection, because he has integrated the negative ones with the positive ones. He has a handle on his emotions and does not let them control him but is able to use them in the way that he wants. He is able to decipher through them and assess the best way to respond to James and John. He chooses love, he always chooses love. That should tell us something. This, however, does not negate that of logic and its importance of being integrated.

Intellectual integration is that of facts, and it is where the truth is sought and found. It deals with a radical transformation in how one thinks about things concerning faith. They are taken out of their own headspace and are able to place themselves with and for others. Someone who is in intellectually integrated is able to see the big pictures and take in knowledge from all directions and deduce what they believe from that. They don’t just take things at face value but are curious enough to find out how it speaks truth into their own lives. They make the truth personal. They are humble and know that they aren’t always right or that there isn’t always one right outcome or answer. This then overflows into becoming morally integrated.

Morality. This has been the subject of conversation a lot lately in the news and media. Especially, when thinking about the morality of our national leaders considering the current status of immigrants in our country. So what does it mean to be morally integrated? Moral integration involves allowing your morality to mature in and through Christ. To be concerned with more than blood ties and be concerned with the entirety of the human race, because we are all blood in the eyes of God. It is what we believe about what is right and what is wrong with the help of the trinity. These beliefs are what drive us into action, social action.

This social action is the sociopolitical integration piece. Which involves being a voice in the community, standing up for human rights in all capacities, and being an activist for humanity and, in turn, God. This is where we stand up and not just stand up and believe, silently, but speak out and do something. This is the out loud call of God shown to us by Jesus Christ with the help of the Holy Spirit. Which means you don’t go at it alone. This is a joint effort with the church to be the people of God who stand up for the people of God with God, no matter what. What should you stand up for?

All of these are equally important and work together in helping you to achieve wholeness as a Christian. You need all of them integrated together to truly achieve what it is that Christ is calling us to do. To be the church. Not to be the building, or flashy worship, or anything like that. Be the people for the people, even if that means you are a crappy sales-person in this consumer obsessed world that we live in.

This is why Jesus is such a horrible sales-person, because he is telling the truth. This road that we have chosen as Christians is not an easy one. It does not give us a hall pass to an easy life because we love Jesus and want to follow him. You will be rejected, disrupted, detached, disoriented, and so much more. This life we live is unfair and unjust, but that is why we are here as the church. We can do something, and we must! There are people all across this beautiful messed up world that we are called to “sell” Christianity to. That doesn’t mean that we need to jazz it up to get good ratings. All we need to do is tell the truth, like Jesus, because this is our purpose. This is our calling. So, I leave you with one last question. What is it that you are going to sell today? Amen.