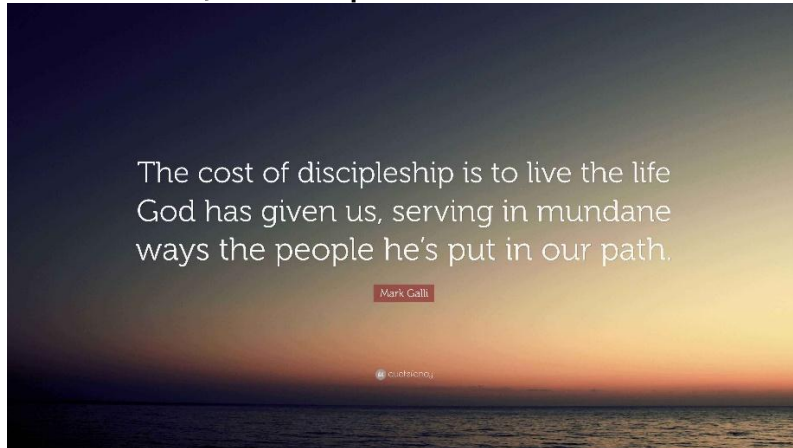


FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JULY 6, 2025

LUKE 9:51-62 | *"ALONG THE ROAD"*



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Ushers –

(NCH) New Century Hymnal - CCLI LICENSE #11164431

*Please stand if comfortably able
and respond with words in bold print

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER CONCERNS:

THE BELL IS RUNG:

PRELUDE: "The Great Commission" Hugh S. Livingston,

PENNIES FOR MISSION:

*RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP:

(Inspired by Psalm 77)

One: Your way, O God, is holy. What god is so great as our God?

Many: You work wonders and display your glory. How great is our God!

One: Your way, O God, is holy. What god is so merciful as our God?

Many: You redeem your people from generation to generation. How merciful is our God!

One: Your way, O God, is holy. What god is so just as our God?

Many: You hear the cries of the troubled and move in righteousness. How just is our God!

*INVOCATION:

God who journeys with us, we gather together as we follow you. You have made rough ways smooth. You have parted seas. You have given us strength to climb

mountains and courage to traverse valleys. We open ourselves to the heartbreak of caring for the world that you love. We claim hope and joy as our inheritance and portion. We remember that you are with us and we give you thanks for the journey. Hallelujah and amen.

***OPENING HYMN: "The Summons" John Bell**

Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?

**Will you go where you don't know
and never be the same?**

**Will you let my love be shown,
will you let my name known,
will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?**

**Will you leave yourself behind if I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind and never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare
should your life attract or scare?
Will you let me answer prayer in you and you in me?**

**Will you let the blinded see if I but call your name?
Will you set the prisoners free and never be the same?
Will you kiss the leper clear,
and do such as this unseen,
And admit to what I mean in you and you in me?**

**Lord, your summons echoes true
when you but call my name.**

**Let me turn and follow you and never be the same.
In your company I'll go
where your love and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me.**

***UNISON PRAYER FOR TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE:**

God of Grace, sometimes the call to follow you comes softly and gently. At other times, your call rushes in with urgency and may even overwhelm us as we balance the obligations of the day with the needs of the day. Gift us with discernment to know what needs our attention, focus, and energy. Free us of distractions, even and especially the ones we create for ourselves. At the same time remind us how to breathe and to be gracious toward one another. We travel on a road we have not built and have not journeyed before. We rely upon you to demonstrate the way and lead us into the fullness of life and your kingdom.

***WORDS OF GRACE:**

Beloved, the grace of God companions with you along the road. We journey this life in Christ, through Christ, and with Christ. Trust and rely upon the wisdom of the Everlasting One who knows you, the gifts you bring, and the burdens you bear. New life and transformation, as all

things, are possible with God. Receive God's grace to free you from fear in order to embrace the journey.

***GLORIA:**

**Glory to the Creator, and the Christ and the Spirit so near. As it was from the start so it shall be forever, One God always here. (repeat twice)
(end) One God always here. One God always here.**

**SCRIPTURE LESSON: First Testament 2 Kings2:1-2, 6-14
From the Message**

2 ¹⁻² Just before God took Elijah to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on a walk out of Gilgal. Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here. God has sent me on an errand to Bethel."

Elisha said, "Not on your life! I'm not letting you out of my sight!" So they both went to Bethel.

⁶ Then Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here. God has sent me on an errand to the Jordan."

Elisha said, "Not on your life! I'm not letting you out of my sight!" And so the two of them went their way together.

⁷ Meanwhile, fifty men from the guild of prophets gathered some distance away while the two of them stood at the Jordan.

⁸ Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up, and hit the water with it. The river divided and the two men walked through on dry land.

⁹ When they reached the other side, Elijah said to Elisha, "What can I do for you before I'm taken from you? Ask anything."

Elisha said, "Your life repeated in my life. I want to be a holy man just like you."

¹⁰ "That's a hard one!" said Elijah. "But if you're watching when I'm taken from you, you'll get what you've asked for. But only if you're watching."

¹¹⁻¹⁴ And so it happened. They were walking along and talking. Suddenly a chariot and horses of fire came between them and Elijah went up in a whirlwind to heaven. Elisha saw it all and shouted, "My father, my father! You—the chariot and cavalry of Israel!" When he could no longer see anything, he grabbed his robe and ripped it to pieces. Then he picked up Elijah's cloak that had fallen from him, returned to the shore of the Jordan, and stood there. He took Elijah's cloak—all that was left of Elijah!—and hit the river with it, saying, "Now where is the God of Elijah? Where is he?"

When he struck the water, the river divided and Elisha walked through.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 77:1-2, 11-20 Page 668-9

EPISTLE LESSON: Galatians 5:1, 13-25

¹ Christ has set us free for freedom. Therefore, stand firm and don't submit to the bondage of slavery again.

¹³ You were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only don't let this freedom be an opportunity to indulge your selfish impulses, but serve each other through love. ¹⁴ All the Law has been fulfilled in a single statement: *Love your neighbor as yourself*. ¹⁵ But if you bite and devour each other, be careful that you don't get eaten up by each other!

Two different ways of living

¹⁶ I say be guided by the Spirit and you won't carry out your selfish desires. ¹⁷ A person's selfish desires are set against the Spirit, and the Spirit is set against one's selfish desires. They are opposed to each other, so you shouldn't do whatever you want to do. ¹⁸ But if you are being led by the Spirit, you aren't under the Law. ¹⁹ The actions that are produced by selfish motives are obvious, since they include sexual immorality, moral corruption, doing whatever feels good, ²⁰ idolatry, drug use and casting spells, hate, fighting, obsession, losing your temper, competitive opposition, conflict, selfishness, group rivalry, ²¹ jealousy, drunkenness, partying, and other things like that. I warn you as I have already warned you, that those who do these kinds of things won't inherit God's kingdom.

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against things like this. ²⁴ Those

who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the self with its passions and its desires.

²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let's follow the Spirit.

***GOSPEL LESSON: Luke 9:51-62**

Jesus sets out for Jerusalem

⁵¹ As the time approached when Jesus was to be taken up into heaven, he determined to go to Jerusalem. ⁵² He sent messengers on ahead of him. Along the way, they entered a Samaritan village to prepare for his arrival, ⁵³ but the Samaritan villagers refused to welcome him because he was determined to go to Jerusalem. ⁵⁴ When the disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to consume them?" ⁵⁵ But Jesus turned and spoke sternly to them, ⁵⁶ and they went on to another village.

Following Jesus

⁵⁷ As Jesus and his disciples traveled along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." ⁵⁸ Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and the birds in the sky have nests, but the Human One^[a] has no place to lay his head." ⁵⁹ Then Jesus said to someone else, "Follow me."

He replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."

⁶⁰ Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead. But you go and spread the news of God's kingdom."

⁶¹ Someone else said to Jesus, “I will follow you, Lord, but first let me say good-bye to those in my house.”

⁶² Jesus said to him, “No one who puts a hand on the plow and looks back is fit for God’s kingdom.”

MESSAGE: The Journey Begins

Before we talk about today’s Gospel passage, I want to put it into context. What happened before this and what will happen afterwards according to the Gospel of Luke.

At the beginning of chapter 9 verse 1, Jesus sends the twelve out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. The prerequisites are the same as when Jesus sends out 70 more in Chapter 10, which you heard about last Sunday. In Chapter 9, verse 10 is the story of the feeding of the five thousand. In verse 20 Peter declares Jesus the Messiah of God. In verse 21 Jesus foretells his death and resurrection. What’s interesting about these passages is that Jesus is finally open to telling his secret. Up to now he wanted those who he had healed to be quiet and not tell who healed them. Jesus would talk openly to only the disciples. He wasn’t ready to declare his true identity. But now he is.

Getting back to chapter 9; what else have we missed? We talked about the Transfiguration. Jesus healed a boy with a demon in verse 37. Jesus again foretells his death in verse 43 and in verse 46 an argument arose among the disciples as to who was the greatest. Knowing what

they were arguing about, Jesus took a child and put her by his side and said to them. Verse 48 “Whoever welcomes this child in my name welcomes me. Whoever welcomes me, welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever is least among you all is the greatest.” In verse 49 we hear John’s arrogant complaint to Jesus, “Master, we saw someone throwing demons out in your name, and we tried to stop him because he isn’t in our group of followers.” ⁵⁰ But Jesus replied, “Don’t stop him, because whoever isn’t against you is for you.”

As these verses make clear, the disciples are still possessed by conventional perspectives of honor and shame and have not grasped the heart of Jesus’ message of salvation and social reversal.

Now we are caught up, the Gospel of Luke switches from what is called the Galilean section of the Gospel and now we come to a new section where verses 51-56 tell us about the fourfold appearance of the language of “journeying” and Jesus’ resolve to go to Jerusalem. Thereafter we find little by way of a travelogue or travel itinerary, even if we do read the occasional reminder that from 9:51 to 19:48, Jesus is “on the way”. As with the journeying of Israel of old, here in Luke’s Gospel we find a “wandering” that is often more about the formation of God’s people than about arriving at a destination. This major section of the Gospel is devoted overwhelmingly to teaching, to intensive disciple-

training. However, the destination and the “end” of this journeying is important. Jesus’ resolve to set his compass on Jerusalem is a matter of obedience to God. I think all of us have difficulty obeying God, just as the first disciples did. The disciples don’t want Jesus to go to Jerusalem just to die and leave them. They rebuke Jesus when he talks like that. But Jesus knows better.

It is in Jerusalem, the centerpiece of the Jewish world, the holy city with its holy Temple and holy people, that the redemptive or rescuing purpose of God must ultimately become evident, just as it is from Jerusalem that the mission “to the end of the earth” must find its trailhead as in Acts 1:8 which reads “⁸ Rather, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Jesus cannot fulfill his mission to restore Israel without confronting those alternative views of Israel – those alternative views of faithfulness to God – residing in the sacred center of the Jewish people: Jerusalem. And it is here that Jesus will undergo his “exodus”, his departure and from here that he will be “taken up”.

We have privileged information. We know how this story ends. Those who say they want to follow Jesus don’t realize what they are asking. Plus some of them have prerequisites of their own.

“I’ll follow you only if . . . “

Now we know why Jesus accepts only a few people to follow him. Are we among those? Amen.

SPECIAL MUSIC: “Come Share the Lord” Video

PASTORAL PRAYER:

Gracious and faithful God, we come to you this morning with worries, and sorrows, and uncertainty because of the world around us. We need to let go and take these worries to the feet of your throne. We need to strongly trust in you. We need to give up our doubts. We need to surrender to God’s wisdom. No matter what, God loves us and we should share that love with as many people as we can. But there’s no “can’t” in God’s vocabulary; only “with God’s help, I can and I will.”

We pray for all those affected by recent tornadoes, and storms, and floods, and excess heat. Perhaps we have the luxury of air-conditioning, but there are millions around the world who don’t. They continue their daily tasks of helping others; without complaining. They obey God’s will.

We pray for all those on our prayer list. All those who are facing surgery or other medical procedures. May all medical workers be blessed with caring hearts, and steady hands. May Jesus be by their sides constantly. We pray all these things in the name of the true physician, Jesus, as we pray together. . .

OUR LORD'S PRAYER:

PRAYER RESPONSE: "Nothing Can Trouble"

(Words on screen)

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY

When we give generously of our resources, our gifts witness to God's abundance, provision, and care. When we give, our gifts demonstrate our appreciation, trust, and compassion to God. Let us give as witnesses of the glory of God and the love of God in the world.

OFFERTORY: "Jesus is Calling" Franklin Ritter

***DOXOLOGY:** (On screen)

***UNISON PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND DEDICATION**
God our Provider, receive these gifts for your creation,
for your kingdom, for your glory. Amen.

GREAT PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Holy Communion

May the wonder-working God be with you!

And also with you!

Children of God, lift up your hearts.

We offer them to the One who gifts us
with abundant fruit of the Spirit.

God's children, let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

We sing songs of joy, love, and peace; we praise God for
the gifts of patience, kindness, generosity; we lift our

thanks for faithfulness, gentleness,
and self-control in our lives.

Your voice thundered, Holy One of Creation,
and silenced the fractious voices of chaos. As the sun,
moon, and stars light our days and nights, so your love
illuminates our souls.

When our fears threaten to flood our lives, you make a
path for us to your heart. All this you do, out of your
love for us, but we forgot all your wonders, and
stretched out our hands to pluck the rotten fruit of the
world.

You sent the prophets to help us to remember your great
acts, but we dismissed their words as having no value for
us. Then, to keep your promise never, never to forsake
us, you sent Jesus Christ to put our feet back on the Holy
Way.

Therefore, trusting that you will hear us, we join our
voices with the chorus of heaven, and with our sisters
and brothers around us, sing our glad songs to you:

Holy, holy, holy are you, God the Creator!

The mountains sing your praises, the valleys echo your
glory. Hosanna in the highest!

We welcome the One who comes in your name, who
calls us to life. Hosanna in the highest!

Holy are you, God of all generations, and blessed is Jesus
Christ, your Son, our Savior.

When he could have remained safe by your side in glory, dear God, he took the risk to follow your call.

When he could have remained safe by your side in glory, he took the risk to follow your call to become one of us.

When he could have ignored our cries for help, he opened his ears and his heart, to bring us words of healing and hope.

When he could have pointed to his miracles and wonders, he spoke of your grace, and called us to service.

When he could have ignored sin and death to return to you, he picked them up and carried them to Calvary, turning and renouncing them forever, as he strode out of the empty tomb into the new life waiting for each of us.

So, as we remember what God has done for us in the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus, we speak of that faith which is a mystery:

Lord Jesus, you call us:

**open our eyes that we may see you,
open our souls that we may long for your presence,
open our hearts that we may follow you.**

Pour out your Spirit upon the gifts of the Table and upon your children who have come to feast.

As we tasted the Bread of life, may we be filled with that generosity which makes us servants.

As we drink from the Cup of grace, may we be

nourished by the fruit of the Spirit found there.

Then, we will go forth to follow where you lead us: to bring justice and mercy into communities crumbling by hate; to bring hope into those neighborhoods where despair sells its wares on the street corners; to bring peace to a broken world governed by violence and war.

And when all time has come to an end, as we gather with our sisters and brothers from every moment and every place, we will sing our glad songs to you, God in Community, Holy in One. Amen.

SENDING

Let us go to wander the streets with God:

for God has everything to do with work, family, our lives, our world.

Let us go to give ourselves away as Jesus did:

**for Jesus calls us to upset those around us,
as we accumulate less stuff and make more friends.**

Let us go to find the lonely, the empty, the searchers:
**for the Spirit would embrace each and every person,
drawing them into the open heart of divine love.**

***CLOSING HYMN: 499 "In All Our Living"**

***BENEDICTION:**

(traditional gaelic blessing modified for inclusivity)

May the road rise up to meet you.

May the wind be always at your back.

May the sun shine warm upon your face;

The rains fall soft upon your fields and until we meet
again, May God hold you in the palm of God's hand.

BENEDICTION RESPONSE:

"Let There Be Peace on Earth"

(words on screen)

THE BELL IS RUNG:

POSTLUDE: "This Is My Country" Al Jacobs