

C 13th Sunday 2013, June 29/30 Enfield, CT

♪ Got my hands on the Gospel plow, wouldn't take nothin' for my journey now.
Keep your hands on that plow, hold on. Hold on, hold on. Keep your hands on that plow, hold on. ♪

In today's Gospel, we hear three memorable proverbs.

"No one who sets a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."
Then there is: "Let the dead bury their dead,"
and "Foxes have dens, birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head."
What did they mean in the time of Jesus? And what are they saying to us here today?

The one about **the plow** - is a response to the person who wants to follow Jesus, but wants to say goodbye to his family first. Jesus is **not** saying "stop loving your family." He is saying "just like you can't plow in a straight line if you keep looking back, neither can you follow me if you do not let go of your past and put the *values* of *my* reign above even the customs of your family, tribe or nation."

Values like the one Paul quotes today, "You must love your neighbor as yourself."

The proverb about **letting the dead bury their dead** sounds harsh, and it is meant to be! It is hyperbole, an exaggeration. If we were to follow it literally, and neglect our parents, we would not be living the law of Christ. Jesus is saying, "you don't have to wait for your father to die, you can't wait until all your family affairs are in perfect order. Follow me **now**, you may not get the chance again."

That's exactly what Elisha does in the first reading.

The proverb about **the foxes and birds** is about following Jesus wherever he goes. Following Jesus meant to let go of the ways even prophets like Elijah and Elisha sometimes acted. They did not hesitate to **kill** in the name of God. In fact, James and John were probably thinking of them when the Samaritans refused to welcome Jesus in today's Gospel. They wanted to fight violence and rejection with rejection and violence. Jesus says clearly, to them and to us, "that is **not** the way my followers act. Violence cannot heal violence. Love your enemies and you will break the cycle of violence."

What does all this say to us today?

First of all: Jesus calls **us** to let go of whatever holds us back from following him: whether it is family, work, old wounds, security, or nostalgia for the old days.

Second, he challenges us to accept the freedom that comes from following him. We celebrate the gift of freedom next Thursday on the 4th of July.

We are called by Christ to use it to serve, to forgive and to spread the light of the Gospel.

First Reading: 1Kings 19:16b, 19-21 [Elisha left his normal life and followed Elijah]

Psalm 16 "You are my inheritance, O Lord."

Second Reading: Galatians 5:1, 13-18 [You were called for freedom; the whole law is fulfilled in one statement,
You shall love your neighbor as yourself.]

Gospel: Luke 9:51-62 [Jesus went through Samaria on his way to Jerusalem; He calls us to follow him]