



TAKING SERIOUSLY THE CALL OF JESUS TO BE A DISCIPLE!

Think back to games from your childhood when someone was chosen to be "It." By means of a hand-tag, by being the first or last to cross a line, by knowing or not knowing the next line of a rhyme or song, you became "It," the next person to lead or continue the play. Some children tried to be designated as "It" while others avoided it or even cried when the designation fell to them.

In the first reading, Elisha finds that he is being called to the life of a prophet when Elijah drapes a cloak over him, proclaiming him as "It." In the Gospel, Jesus outlines the life of anyone who answers the call to discipleship, the call to be "It." This life is not one of glamour and Jesus is very serious about the ramifications of this call.

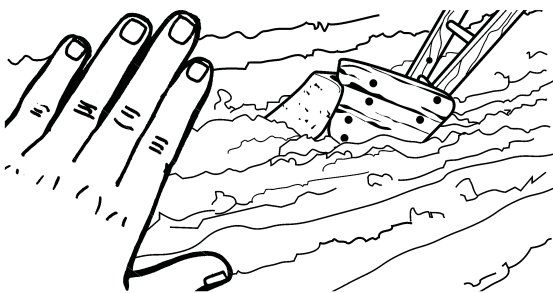
"Elisha then left and followed Elijah as his attendant" (I Kgs 19:21). Elisha is not unwilling to follow Elijah, he simply wants time to say farewell to his old life. But he understands that excuses are not acceptable; indeed, excuses will only prevent the fulfillment of the reason for which he has been born, which is his call as a prophet. As a prophet, he will take on God's yoke and thus take up his new career in a spirit of silence, leaving behind all the excuses.

The Samaritans would not receive him because he was going to Jerusalem. The response of the apostles is to want to call down fire from heaven to destroy these Samaritans. Jesus turns them in a different direction. Who are the Samaritans in your life, the people you would like to get rid of if you could? What about assuming the attitude of Jesus, avoiding vengeance, looking for ways to forgive, searching out peace? If you are "It," then you need to define and live your role of being Proclaimer of the Good News. Our circumstances and the people in our lives are not an obstacle to following Jesus. The life in which we are deeply engaged is the exact place in which we are being asked to do our missionary work. Discipleship is not for people who can clear away their personal agenda. Our personal agenda *is* the place of discipleship.

Once the hand is laid on the plow, no one who looks back is fit for the kingdom of God. We use parents, children, spouses, work, school, health, etc., to excuse ourselves from discipleship, and all these excuses are met by Jesus with the same response: "You are 'It,' GO." How many times have you said: Let me eat this candy and then I'll start my diet. Let me finish this task and then I'll take time to pray. Let me make more money and then we'll start a family. We are all busy. Where we choose to spend our time tells us something about what is our top priority.

Following Jesus is serious business. We cannot be indecisive and uncommitted. Being a Christian is not just saying we are one, it's being willing to be "It" and truly living the way Jesus calls us to live.

As we move to the table of the Eucharist, upon which is offered the sacrifice of Jesus, the best model of putting hand to the plow and not looking back.



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*"No one who sets a hand to the plow and looks to what was left behind is fit for the kingdom of God."
-- Luke 9:62*