



Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. **AMEN**

A farmer was teaching his young son how to plow. As his son sat in the tractor seat, his dad pointed to the far end of the field. "Now son," he said, "What you have to do is keep your eyes on one point at the far end of the field. Just focus on that one thing and drive straight toward it. And when you get to the other side of the field, your row will be straight as an arrow. Understand?"

The boy nodded in agreement, "Just keep my eyes on one thing and drive toward it. Got it dad!"

So, the boy started up the tractor. He looked keenly at the far end of the field. His eyes fixed on something and then he slowly let out the clutch. The tractor began to roll down the length of the field. He was plowing a perfectly straight row. Dad felt a swell of pride in his heart.

But then, about halfway down the field, the tractor started to veer to the left. And not just a little bit. The boy was plowing way, way off course! By the time he reached the far end of

the field, he was disastrously off. Dad could not believe it. How could his son have failed so miserably? He threw his hat to the ground in disgust and ran to the far side of the field.

“Son, I told you to keep your eyes on one thing and drive right at it! What happened?”

“But, dad, I did! I was watching a cow in the next pasture, and she started to walk towards that tree over there. But I just kept following her like you told me too!”

Well, most of us don't have a lot of experience plowing fields, except a certain Doc among us. But I think we can understand how this can happen. It can happen driving a car. You look to the right and somehow the wheel just moves in that direction. Right? Easy to be distracted while we drive, isn't it? Well, today distracted driving is the number one factor in car accidents. Alcohol and speeding are right behind as causes of car accidents. So, the advice here is to know your prize and keep your eyes on the prize and you will get to your destination safely.

Well, in our Gospel reading for this morning Jesus has his eyes on the prize, our prize in fact. Jesus has set his sights on Jerusalem. The cross. Nothing would interfere. Not an inhospitable Samaritan village and surely not angry followers. At this point Jesus is following the will of His Father, that He go to Jerusalem to be crucified to save us and give us the gracious gifts of forgiveness, abundant life, and the promise of eternal life in heaven one day. He set his sights on Jerusalem, a suicide mission, to fulfill God's will. Nothing would dissuade the fulfilling of His mission.

And we too are called to follow Jesus, not to certain death, but rather to live into the kingdom secured for us both here on earth and in our eternal lives. BUT. . . .

Remember last week, how I started off my message. Are you comfortable? Wouldn't want to make anyone uncomfortable, would we? Well, this text and message today ask us to take a good long look at ourselves, a critical look of how we are doing following Jesus. This sort of talk can make us uncomfortable as we honestly answer that question. We feel we are doing OK, BUT. . . . We could do better. Well, I am here to tell you that I think we should kick all the BUTs out of church right here and right now.

I do realize that when you called me to be your spiritual leader you asked me questions as to how I would go about getting more butts in the pews. With that being said, I do not want anyone's butt to leave here today never to return. But I do want us to think for a minute on how many BUTS we have when we are confronted with the idea of being a disciple and truly following Jesus.

In our text someone comes to Jesus and says he wants to follow Jesus wherever he will go. Jesus responds, “foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” Jesus is really asking if the man wants to follow Him even if the man does not know completely what that might mean. In other words, are you ready to do without? Just to follow Jesus?

The second man comes to Jesus and offers to follow Him, but . . . he first needs to go and bury his father. Jesus replies, “Let the dead bury their own dead.” Curious answer? Some scholars think that this is a call to let those who are spiritually dead to bury the physically

dead. Even though the Jews had strict burial rites, the man is requesting time to tend to family matters. Even though burial is an urgent responsibility as well as an honorable one, there is a more important responsibility of a disciples to proclaim the kingdom of God. Nothing should take first place or top priority than to follow Jesus.

Still another guy, comes to Jesus and says he too wants to follow Jesus but first needs to go home to say good-bye to his family. Jesus has a retort to him as well. "No one who puts a hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God." Another curious answer? Using our example again of looking forward and setting our eyes on the prize could have something to do with what Jesus is saying here. Look forward and don't turn back to our old ways. What do you think?

Well, what can we take away from these three examples and the many, many more in Scripture? First of all, I think it is prudent not to condemn those who offer BUTS, or excuses. Who among us has not done the same? Even giants of the faith have had their own BUTS as well. Moses asked God, but who am I to go to Pharaoh and lead the Israelites out of slavery. God told Abraham he would be the father of the nations, but he asked God how that could be since he was so old. Jeremiah said he was but a young boy. Isaiah said to God, but I am a man of unclean lips. All of these examples were great men of faith that God used and then blessed them for their discipleship.

How do we respond when we are asked to do something for the kingdom? Do we have lots of BUTS? Do we make excuses about coming to worship on Sunday morning, but it is our only day to sleep in. Do we make excuses about joining a Bible study, but we have so many other things to do during the week? Do we make excuses about bringing treats for coffee hour, but we just don't have time to bake? Do we fail to give 10% back to God, but we might not have enough money left to pay our bills and still go on vacation? Time to ban the BUTS from our discipleship journey. Come to worship, join a Bible study, volunteer for coffee hour, and give generously and you will be amazed at the blessings that await you. In fact, you might even find that you enjoy worship. You might find that you enjoy baking. You might find that joining a Bible study gives you the answers you have been looking for. You might find that giving to the church is a blessing to you and your family.

So, is there a BUT that is hindering your Christian journey? A BUT that is keeping you from blessings? Give some thought to getting your priorities straight so you can serve God as a true disciple. Ban the BUTS in your Christian journey and when you look forward, you will find that you will be blessed beyond measure. **AMEN**