

Proper 8C
St. Luke 9:51-62
June 26, 2016
St. George's Church Bolton
Fr. Chris

Wait a Minute

"Another said, 'I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home.' Jesus said to him, No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

Boy that seems rather harsh! Don't bother to bury your father or say good-bye to your family and friends. Both are willing to follow Jesus, but both are coming up with excuses to procrastinate: *"first, let me do this God, then I will do what you want me to."*

God must tire of hearing our excuses. Our spiritual lives are often left on the back burner, without any heat underneath them to keep them going! It is so easy to take other priorities first. *"No lightning bolt is going to strike me,"* we say. *"I have plenty of time to tend to my faith and spirituality. Right now I have bigger fish to fry!"*

It is like having a credit card with a very high limit on it. Ever have one of those? You keep using it and using it and need not worry because the credit limit is so high, there is always plenty of room on the card to buy more. And then the day comes: your card gets declined. Oops, how embarrassing! Or worse yet, the card bill comes in the mail, and holding your chest, you gasp as the debt fix you are in becomes clear. Well that's the fix we are sort of in when it comes to the spiritual life: our spiritual lives postponed like an unwanted debt, like an over-extended credit

limit. The debt is always due, [when it comes to God] and we will never have enough to pay it, but that doesn't mean we should simply throw in the towel. Actually, someone else already paid the debt off for us.

We have lots of opportunities to set things straight in life. Each morning we awaken is one more of those opportunities to choose to follow God. Is God the first thought on your mind as you wake up? Do you offer thanks to God for the new day and the many blessings you enjoy? It is good for us spiritually to begin our day in gratitude for those blessings. It is good for us to consciously choose to follow God and not our own agenda.

Yet our agenda, our "To Do" list looms large in front of us. It often leads us to forget God, to give that "*just one more thing*" excuse. And as soon as the excuse falls off our lips, the opportunity passes, and we end up being distracted and following our own "*one more things*."

You see, it isn't just one more thing. It is a bunch of things. "I will follow you Jesus, just let me put the dishes in the dish washer first, before I go." And on putting the dishes in the dishwasher, I remember that I need to take out the trash, and on taking out the trash, I remember I have to clean the cat box. And while cleaning the cat box, I remember I need to pay the Vet bill, **today**, before I go to work. And so on and so on. There's always one more thing, one more excuse.

Why don't we make following God a priority? Why not make our prayers as big a priority as the mundane morning tasks of life? Why make excuses? Why procrastinate? What's that about? Do we devalue the spiritual life because it is a free, undeserved gift? Do we not see the personal value of finding the *pearl of great*

price and then selling all we have, [at least making our spiritual life a top priority each day] following Jesus where he leads us?

What would it look like if we didn't go the *one more thing* route? What if we put God first when we wake up? We could begin with a simple two-line prayer. We could begin our day sitting on the side of the bed, listing the blessings for which we are thankful. And they are many. Just list even a few. To begin a day with an attitude of gratitude instead of attitude about servitude to our "To Do Lists" brings a sense of peace and purpose over our weary minds. When we remember we are in God's hands, it places the priorities of life in context, so we can discern what is important from what is peripheral.

And that is the crunch: not being overcome by the small peripheral "tunnel vision." Instead, we can see the larger picture of what is important in life. And instead of seeing the clock as a credit card with an unlimited credit limit, we see out time as a precious, limited and extremely valuable possession to be spent wisely and carefully, according to what is our real priority in life, and not wasting it as though we can consistently rack up more time-debt until there is no time left to spend. That is the way God can help make a difference in our lives in this regard. God reminds us of our mortality and dependence upon God. We place our time in God's hands.

The motto of the Advent season applies here with the question, "*what time is it?*" The time is now. The hour is now. The minute is now. *This is the day the Lord has made: I will rejoice and be glad in it.*

Recently, I was talking with one of my friends that I knew back in high school. They reported with glee that they have retired a

little early due to a very generous public service job pension. 40 years of hard working, they said. Now what? Indeed, much of life is now spent and behind them. Did they live a life according to someone's expectations or their passions? Did they live a fulfilling life? Did they respond to the call of God? I wonder. You can live a life of Casper Milquetoast and always meet everyone else's expectations. You can cover all the bases and not leave that "one more thing undone." But is that living? Is that a good use of your time? I leave that question as food for thought to ponder.

The so-called mid-life crisis, can really hit at anytime, any age. So when it is mid life is up to your own opinion, and it is one of those "*what time is it?*" moments. For me, it struck some 20 years ago, when I began to notice a disconnect between the values of my youth which led me into this vocation of serving God's Church, and the life which I had allowed to take over in my personal and so called "professional" life. I had too many "*one more things to do,*" so I was very lax in addressing the deep spiritual concerns of my life. I waited for the decision to be made for me, and I set myself up and, *it was made for me*. But I am thankful for that, because, as good as my life seemed to me 20 years ago, I needed to get back on track. I am still a work in progress, so well see how that turns out! Mid-life crisis is a time to re-orient our priorities, and perhaps to revalue the spiritual life somewhere in the mix.

Life goes by so fast, if you blink, it is almost over. And one wonders in the end, if you have lived it the way you ought to have lived it, or whether you merely treaded water for 40 years. I know it is never too late to answer the upward call, to set aside the excuses, to set your priorities straight, but *time* is running out! AMEN