***Call to Worship:***

It is good to give thanks to God;

**Let us sing praises to God’s holy name!**

We will declare God’s steadfast love in the morning,

**And God’s faithfulness night after night.**

Let us make a joyful noise in our worship!

**For God is good and we know God’s blessings.**

Let us worship God with grateful hearts;

**We will give God thanks in our prayers and praise.**

***Hymn***: # 471 We Are One in the Spirit

***Prayer of Approach and Confession:***

Faithful, fruitful God, you created our minds to grow in wisdom.
You created our hearts to expand with love.
You created our voices to sing your praises forever.

We bring you our worship with joyful praise, turning to Jesus for grace and guidance.
Fill us to overflowing with your Holy Spirit so that the fruit of the Spirit will abound in our lives.
May we worship you in spirit and in truth, and serve you in the example of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Faithful, fruitful God, you call us to follow you, whatever the circumstance, yet we confess we prefer to remain where we are.

You offer us new beginnings, yet we continue to make the same choices, guided by our own desires.

We make excuses for avoiding your challenge to change.

Forgive us, O God.

Cleanse us with your mercy, and energize us to serve you even when the challenge seems great.

For we pray in the name of Jesus the Christ. Amen.

***Assurance of Pardon:***

In Christ, we are made a new creation; the old life is gone and the new life has come! Know that God loves us and forgives us. Do not be afraid to make a new start!

***Hymn***: # 472 We Are God's People

***Scripture Readings: (NIV)***

Psalm 77:1-2, 11-20

**1**I cried out to God for help;
    I cried out to God to hear me.
**2**When I was in distress, I sought the Lord;
    at night I stretched out untiring hands,
    and I would not be comforted.

**11**I will remember the deeds of the Lord;
    yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago.
**12**I will consider all your works
    and meditate on all your mighty deeds.”

**13**Your ways, God, are holy.
    What god is as great as our God?
**14**You are the God who performs miracles;
    you display your power among the peoples.
**15**With your mighty arm you redeemed your people,
    the descendants of Jacob and Joseph.

**16**The waters saw you, God,
    the waters saw you and writhed;
    the very depths were convulsed.
**17**The clouds poured down water,
    the heavens resounded with thunder;
    your arrows flashed back and forth.
**18**Your thunder was heard in the whirlwind,
    your lightning lit up the world;
    the earth trembled and quaked.
**19**Your path led through the sea,
    your way through the mighty waters,
    though your footprints were not seen.

**20**You led your people like a flock
    by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

Luke 9:51-62

**51**As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. **52**And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; **53**but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. **54**When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?” **55**But Jesus turned and rebuked them. **56**Then he and his disciples went to another village.

**57**As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.”

**58**Jesus replied, “Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.”

**59**He said to another man, “Follow me.”

But 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 proclaim the kingdom of God.”

**61**Still another said, “I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family.”

**62**Jesus replied, “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”

***Meditation:*** **Step Up**

*And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him;****53****but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem.****54****When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?”*

So I'm kind of intrigued with the opening verses in the passage that we just finished reading. Jesus is headed toward Jerusalem. He comes into or he's coming into a Samaritan village. Some are sent ahead to get ready.  The people are not welcoming. If it's a Samaritan village that's kind of understandable, because Samaritans and Jews did not connect. There were issues. So that's kind of interesting to begin with.

But what really gets me is the disciples. James and John immediately ask if Jesus wants them to be punished. ‘Look at this, they're not respecting you. Let’s rain down fire and destroy them.’

There are parallels to parts of life in this. How often do we have that reaction? Maybe not to that extent, but how often do we have that reaction when there's something that doesn't go our way? The disciples are standing up for Jesus. He's not being respected. And they want to punish those who are not respecting Jesus.

The disciples have been learning what it means to be connected to Jesus, what it means to be followers. Jesus is teaching them about a life of faith.  A life of discipleship. And sometimes the learning is a bit hard. The decision to choose this life of discipleship is hard. It cannot be something that we can pick up and put down. It's life shifting direction. It's finding new priorities.

And we don't always follow.

This passage in Luke marks a very significant shift, or transition in Jesus’ life. In his ministry he's been teaching about what is really important. He's been teaching about God.

And now. The time is coming as it says, the day's drawing near for him to be taken up and so he changes direction physically. He changes direction and heads towards Jerusalem, heads toward what he knows is about to happen.

We all have those times in our lives when we have to change direction, when we have to shift focus or priorities or transition into something different. We start out learning about God, learning about the church, learning about faith and what it means to be a child of God. We know that we are loved and we know that our God is a caring, awesome God.  And as we continue to grow, we realize and we learn to love God with all of our being. And sometimes

following Christ along that journey we come across difficult choices. Sometimes it's easier to just take the way of the world and secular society and not worry so much about what it means to be a child of God.

Jesus headed in a new direction. And in heading in that new direction, he came up against opposition.

The people of Samaria were defiant. They definitely did not understand what it was that he was doing or where he was going. They only saw that he was a Jew, heading to the holy city, a pilgrimage as it were.

As I said earlier, he went into a Samaritan village.

Now Samaritans and Jews worshipped in different ways, worshipped God in different ways. And these 2 groups really did not have anything to do with each other, hadn’t for generations.

Jesus, on the other hand, makes those connections. Remember the parable about the good Samaritan? Who stopped to help the man who had been robbed and beaten and left for dead? The Samaritan stopped when a scribe and a pharisee had both carried on and left him lying there.

Or what about the story of Jesus and the woman at the well? He speaks to her a woman, a Samaritan woman, both big ‘no-no’s’. And he offers her living water. He offers her a whole new way of being.

So once again, here we have Jesus making a connection with Samaritans.

He's traveling from Galilee to Judea heading toward Jerusalem. And because he hasn't been welcomed properly, according to his disciples, they become indignant and they want punishment to take place.

Jesus doesn't want to punish those who are reluctant to support him, neither on the road to Jerusalem or even today. Jesus is not about punishing those who resist. Or about compelling those who need to get in line or face up to the consequences? Jesus invites those who believe in him to walk the walk with him, to follow him on the journey. (remember the window… standing at the door waiting to be invited in?)

Unfortunately, not everyone is ready to follow that path, to take that journey, to take up your cross.

The passage in Luke goes on to talk about some of those that Jesus encountered, who were exactly in that position.  They believed they wanted it, but they were not up for it. And really if you look at the excuses, maybe not quite up to the excuses of those who couldn't come to the wedding feast, but the excuses seem, you know, almost reasonable.

We have a very enthusiastic fan of Christ who would follow him anywhere. We are sometimes like that. We go in whole-heartedly. We agree that Jesus is primary in our lives. But what does that really mean when you break it down? Is it listening to him?  Is it just learning? Or is it more than that?

Jesus points out that the foxes have holes, and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. If you choose to follow his path you may find that there is difficulty and maybe, symbolically or realistically, no place to lay your head.

And sometimes, as in the second situation priorities change.

It's interesting to note that for the Jewish people having a proper burial was more important than just about anything. Mourning lasted 7 days and Jesus knew that this burial of the father could take a long time. And he knew that he did not have enough time for this man to deal, even if it was this critical and this painful.

Jesus wasn't being cruel when he responded by saying, ‘let the dead take care of the dead’ He knew the timing. He knew what was ahead and what needed to be done.

In the third situation, family and work with the family are seen as needing to be done. But once again, Jesus is pointing out the necessity to follow.

I was not raised on a farm. I grew up in farming country and I've always been amazed at how straight fields can be plowed. And I understand that the way to do that is to keep your eyes forward not looking back. You can go off course if you are focussed on where you have been. (Now there's a whole sermon in that alone). Jesus is highlighting in each of these situations, the importance of your whole being connected and tied up with him. Jesus offers each one of us the opportunity to follow-on the journey, the journey of faith.

And while it may seem that I I'm saying that we need to let go of all of our responsibilities toward family and work, vocation. That's not what I am saying. The journey that we are on does not demand that we reject these responsibilities, instead, what it is saying is that we need to be encouraged to see all of these things in our lives in light of our faith, through the lens of our commitment to Christ. It needs to be all tied in together.

If we are the disciples of Christ that we have been called to be, then we need to continue to do what he started. We need to be the people that others will see who he is in each one of us.

Let's take that step, let's follow just as we have been called to follow. And let's be the disciples that Christ would have us be.

***Hymn***: # 662 Those Who Wait on the Lord

***Invitation of Offering:***

According to the Apostle Paul, the fruit of the Spirit includes kindness and generosity, gifts of God we enjoy. As we present our offering, may the Spirit fill us with generosity, and multiply our kindness for the sake of Christ our Lord.

***Doxology***

***Prayer of Dedication:***

O God, we know you to be kind and generous, so we bring our gifts in gratitude and joy. Pour out your Spirit on these gifts and on our lives, so that we may bear the fruit of your Spirit in every situation and relationship, through Christ, our Living Lord. Amen.

***Prayers of the People:***

God of mystery and mercy,

God of our past and our future,

We come before you today carrying all the hopes and dreams, and the burdens and blessings of our lives.

We bring all that is on our hearts and minds to you today, grateful for the goodness, seeking your comfort and strength, listening for your guidance.

God of life and love,

You engage us in the midst of our lives when we need you.

We pray today for all those who feel fearful about their future, and for all who wrestle with challenges at work or at home.

We remember before you those weighed down by illness or worry, and all who provide care for those in need of support.

Help each one of us face our fears and our challenges supported by your love.

God of courage and comfort, whenever we wrestle with any burden, your Spirit prays within us with sighs too deep for words.

Today we pray for all those whose burdens seem too heavy to bear:

For the victims of violence or disaster, and for their friends and families…

For refugees at risk in so many places in the world, remembering especially those who have had to flee their home lands…

We pray those caught in despair and poverty in our own community and in the forgotten corners of your world…

Renew the strength of all those challenged by realities beyond their control and equip our leaders to support those in the deepest need.

God of the world and all its peoples, we pray for our country and our leaders as we prepare to mark Canada Day.

Equip Canada to be a force for justice and well-being in your world.

Give our leaders wisdom and integrity to make decisions that provide for a good future for all who call this nation home.

Open our eyes and our hearts to the opportunities we have to serve you in serving one another.

Make us alert to cries for justice in our midst and guide us in repairing relationships strained by differences between us.

And now we gather our prayers into one voice and pray as Jesus taught;

Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy Name.
Thy Kingdom come.
Thy will be done on earth,
As it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
Lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
The power, and the glory,
For ever and ever.
Amen.

***Hymn***: # 635 Brother, Sister Let Me Serve You

***Benediction:***

Go in peace. Love and serve the Lord.

And may the blessing of God, who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, ever Three and ever One, be with us each one now and always. Amen