

The other day as I was walking the track at the high school early in the morning – I overheard a coach tell a group of young men: “If you don’t want to be coached, you’re in the wrong place.”

He could have just as easily said, “If you don’t want to listen to me, just go on home.” Because if those young men want to be on a team, they can’t be doing what they want – they have to do what is best for the team – and the coach is there to tell them ---- what is best for the team.

Throughout these Sundays of Ordinary Time – we listen to the Gospel of Luke – in order to learn more about Jesus – so we can place our trust in him – so we can be his witnesses in the world.

So, if we want to be on Jesus’ team – then we can’t be doing what we want to do –we have to do what is best for the team --- and Jesus is here to lead and guide us is doing --- what is best for the team.

So to echo the wisdom of the coach – if we don’t want to follow after Jesus –then we are in the wrong place.

To follow after Jesus we have to do things God’s way – not ours. We have to do God’s will – not ours. We have to build God’s kingdom – not ours.

And so following after Jesus requires that we surrender our hearts, our minds, and our lives – to him.

Surrender – that’s not a very popular word especially in our 21st century American vocabulary.

We tend to think of it as a negative thing – a defeat -- a term of failure: in that the Germans and Japanese surrendered to the Allied forces to end World War II.

But remember things don’t work the same way in the kingdom of God as they work in the world – which is why it is often times hard to grasp the values of the kingdom and put them into practice in our lives---because they are so contrary to our normal way of thinking.

In the kingdom of God – those who lose their lives will save them --- the last will be first and the first will be last --- those who do things for the least of their brothers and sisters do them for Jesus, himself.

And in the kingdom of God – there is nothing wrong with surrender.

Which is why we have Mary saying, “be it done to me wholly according to your word.”

John the Baptist who says of Jesus, “he must increase and I must decrease.”

We have St. Paul saying in today’s reading: “I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me.”

And St. Augustine saying, “our hearts are restless, O God, until they rest in you.”

To follow after Jesus we have to do things God’s way – not ours. We have to do God’s will – not ours. We have to build God’s kingdom – not ours.

And so following after Jesus requires that we surrender our hearts, our minds, and our lives to him.

If we don’t want to do that – then we are in the wrong place this morning. Nobody said this will be easy – which is why Jesus will tell us next week to take up our cross and follow after him.

In the readings today, there is a contrast between two people when it comes to surrender: King David and the sinful woman in the Gospel.

Even though God had called David to lead the people of Israel, God’s people, as their king ---- David did not always surrender his heart, mind and life to God – too often he was doing his own thing rather than God’s: he fell in love with another man’s wife, had a child by her, and then sent her husband, Uriah, to the front lines of battle to be killed.

I think it is safe to say that David’s pride and his confidence in himself – caused him to be stubborn of heart –

doing the manly thing of being the master of his own destiny --- forgetting all along that he would have nothing --- if it were not for God.

It is only after Nathan the prophet calls David on the carpet in today's reading that David comes to his senses -- and commits himself fully to following after the lord. Better late than never!

Contrast that with the ease in which the sinful woman enters the Pharisee's house, stands behind Jesus -- weeping, and begins to bathe his feet with her tears.

She knows that she has fallen short of being the person God has called her to be --and she knows that Jesus is the source of her forgiveness and the source of grace to do better ----- and so she willingly humbles herself before Jesus -- and surrenders herself to his mercy -- and because of this Jesus says to her: "Your faith has saved you -- go in peace."

Who are we most like: the reluctant David, or the eager woman? Do we wait until we are in a bind, called on the carpet by someone else before we surrender to God's will --- or do we actively search Jesus out to throw ourselves upon the font of his abundant grace and mercy?

And just remember: if we don't want to follow after Jesus -- on his terms, not ours ---- then we are just in the wrong place this morning. . .