

#3-The Forgotten: The Minority

06/14/2009 - Jim Johnson – Luke 9:51-56

Minorities are some of the forgotten people. Does He remember the minority person? Luke 9:51-56 says He does. The story goes like this...

A. Jesus Planned to _____ in. – 51-52

Jesus had decided it was time for His disciples to carry on, and for Him to exit. So He set His face toward Jerusalem where He would eventually die as a Lamb of God for all mankind. (51) He was up in the northern part of the country in Galilee. He needed to go south into Judea, where Jerusalem stood. The conscientious Jew would have traveled a very circuitous route in order to avoid walking through the Samaritan lands that lay between.

This was motivated by racial/religious prejudice. The Jewish majority hated the Samaritans. They were descendents of Jews and Gentiles who had intermarried so that their racial and religious identity became blurred and intermixed. In Ezra's day they tried to assist with the rebuilding of the temple but were rebuffed by the Jews. (Ezra 4:2-3). Centuries of animosity had been built up between the Jews and Samaritans, so the scrupulous Jew would walk around Samaria rather than through it.

Not Christ, however. He took the shortest path right through the middle of Samaria. The road would take Him through the population centers of that region. He was not gripped with the same racial prejudice that controlled his countrymen.

He decided that He and His disciples needed food and a place to rest and an excuse to stop and preach the Good news to the locals. He anticipated coming to a village, and sent a couple of disciples ahead to make arrangements. (52)

B. The Forgotten _____ Him out. – 53

The messengers were met with apathy, indifference, and downright hostility. They were turned away at the village gate. They were not welcome. This was because Jesus and friends were journeying toward Jerusalem. (Discrimination is almost always a 2 way street.) Again it was rooted in history. The Samaritans were not welcomed into the Jewish temple back in Ezra's day. So they built a temple on Mt. Gerizim. 150 years prior to this episode with Jesus, a Jewish King named John Hyracanus marched up to Gerizim and leveled that temple. The Samaritans in turn tried to defile the Jewish temple. The racial hatred became fossilized in a worship war. If you were a Jew headed to worship at the temple, you were especially revolting to the Samaritans. The Samaritans were known to even heckle, harass and harm the Jew in route to the temple. The temple was where Jesus was headed, so they refused to allow Him to enter.

C. Jesus therefore _____ them by. – 54-56

James and John were likely the messengers sent to the village. They were probably tired, thirsty and hungry and wanted some refreshment. When they were turned away, they let go with a tirade. These guys demonstrated that, at the core, they were just as prejudiced and bigoted as the next Jew. There had been plenty of times when Jesus had been maltreated by the Jewish leaders of Israel, but James and John had never expressed such outrage. Their bigotry served as a dark backdrop by which to magnify the non discriminating love and concern of the Lord Jesus Christ. James and John wanted to call down fire to destroy them much as Elijah had done hundreds of years earlier. (53-54)

Jesus rebuked them for their harsh and lethal attitude reminding them that He came to seek and save the lost. James and John were vindictive and bigoted and more than willing to watch the Samaritans wither under the fiery judgment of God. They had the wrong spirit and didn't even know it.

Having been turned away however, Christ had no choice but to travel on down the road looking for a village that might be more receptive to his visit. (56)

ANALYSIS

The Samaritans were so steeped in bitterness that they could not distinguish a good heart from a bad one. They were not able to recognize the God that came to remember the forgotten. Had they only known what Christ could have and would have done had they let Him in! Every time He entered a town or village he brought healing and liberation, and hope and eternal life. Those are the kinds of things that He would have done in that nameless village. That is why He wanted to stop. But He was not welcomed. He was turned away. And the people in that town who were tormented with demons remained shackled. Those with leprosy still rotted away, the blind remained in darkness, the lame still shuffled around on their mats. The hopeless were still in despair and the bitter were still chained to their bitterness.

God does not forget the minority, but the _____ that sometimes comes with being a minority can cause us to reject Him.

Don't let that happen to you. Jesus knocks on the gate to your heart. He wants to know if you will receive Him. Don't turn him away. Don't send him down the road to someone else.

PS: One of the most nauseating sins of the church today is racism. Not only do Christian people sometimes tolerate it, at times the institutional church blatantly defends it. How unlike the Lord Jesus who remembers the forgotten – even the minority. May we emulate his sterling example!

FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

Use this section in your personal or family devotions to better apply the truth.

1. Who are the forgotten minorities in our East Texas culture?
2. Who is representing Christ by trying to reach them?
3. What part can you play?