

# Sunday Thought

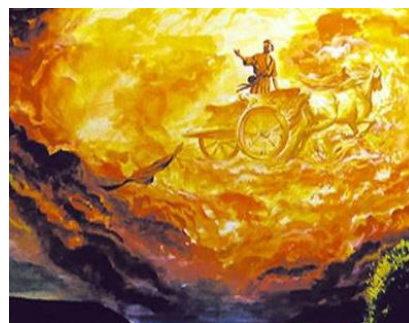
26th June 2022 13th Sunday in Ordinary Time

## Readings

2 Kings 2: 1 - 2, 6 - 14  
Psalm 77: 1 - 2, 11 - 20  
Galatians 5: 1, 13 - 25  
Luke 9: 51 - 62

## Let's Get Real!

In today's reading Luke writes of a critical time in Jesus' ministry. Much of his work till then had been in Galilee. He had attracted great numbers of people from near and far, gathered a considerable army of practical support workers and assembled his core group for ministry and mission. That group had shared his popularity, successes, and times of opposition too, as he had prepared them to share his power and authority. They would need it for promoting the Kingdom of God. Earlier in the chapter Luke told how Jesus had challenged the 'twelve' about who they really thought he was, and tried to explain to them how his work would end with suffering, death, resurrection and glory. He had shown them something of that glory when he was transfigured in front of them on mount Tabor. Now, the time had come to set out for Jerusalem. It is at this point Jesus challenges their commitment to him. *'We're going up to Jerusalem. We've had these glorious bonding days in Galilee, now we are embarking on the real purpose for which the Father sent me. Let's go. Let's get real about discipleship!'*



Three things at least, happened to challenge their commitment. The first was a question of race and 'difference' – of religion and faith. Jesus decided to take a short cut through the border of Samaria. From way back in history – some seven centuries in fact – Jews and Samaritans were 'non-social neighbours. One of their differences was about where God's temple should be situated. For Jews it was Jerusalem, for Samaritans it was Shechem where their temple had been destroyed a century ago. Because Jesus was making a pilgrimage to worship in Jerusalem some radical Samaritans refused him hospitality in their village. James and John were furiously offended for Jesus, but he rebuked them. The Kingdom of God is far more important than religious bigotry. *'Let's get real'*. As he has been saying to us over many years, *'Get real, the Kingdom and the Father's love for the world comes before "which Church?"'* Further along the road a man had caught the Kingdom vision – God's new society – and wanted to join the tour. He and another, whom Jesus invited to join them both wanted their commitment to discipleship to be conditional. *'I will follow you, but ...'* He likened that to not ploughing a straight furrow. I think he may have said to us. *'You can't drive safely on a narrow country lane with your eyes fixed on the rear mirror!'*

The same theme of full commitment may be found in the other scriptures for today. The prophet Elisha was called by God to a vital religious and political mission, setting the whole nation of Israel free from corruption and pagan idolatry ready for social reform and religious revival. He had the prophet Elijah as his teacher and mentor. Elijah prepared this prophet disciple to succeed him as God's spokesman to kings and priests. His own faithful, courageous days on earth were nearly done. Heaven was waiting. And what a way to go – in a personally adapted horse-drawn chariot, making a spectacular exit, engulfed in flames! He was ready to hand over the prophet's role, but he had to be sure Elisha was ready. On their final journey to the departure point at the river Jordan, Elijah challenged his pupil to be sure what following him would involve. It was another '*time to get real*' moment. Elisha was ready and like true disciples of Jesus would learn, he asked only to be like his master in every way.

The other scripture from Paul's letter to several churches in the province of



Galatia, has a further '*get real*' challenge. Reading verses 19 – 21 we could understandably think we had turned on an evening's television programme or picked up a copy of a daily newspaper. It's all about what Paul describes as human nature, most of which is contrary to the way of life in the kingdom of God.

It can be so easy though to condemn harmful social attitudes, but easier still to slip into sharing them. Jesus called us to be '*different*'. '*Come,*' Paul writes. '*Let's be real about following Jesus today.*' There is a simple choice; the way of verses 19 – 21 or that of 22 – 23 – which is living the kingdom way of love, joy, peace, patience kindness etc. As Elisha put on the mantle of his teacher, our times call for those who will '*put on the Spirit of Jesus Christ*' and be ready to be like him all the way. '*Come on then. Let's be real for Jesus and the way of God's Kingdom!*'

#### **A prayer to renew our faith in God** [based on Psalm 77]

Lord, there are so many amazing times when I cried out to you for help and you answered me - sometimes just as I wanted.

There were other times when you seemed to say, '*Wait for me. This is going to take a while longer*'.

Then there are those long nights of comfortless prayer when I just can't seem to get through and the morning is a long time coming. Then, I must learn to turn my thoughts from me to you: to think about your great works of creation and re-creation; to remember your amazing acts in history, which have changed the world, renewed the church and transformed human lives just like mine.

Help me to be serious about my faith in you.

Let me open my life to your loving, calming, powerful Spirit.

Make my faith in you be real to the point of true commitment.