

Follow Me
Preacher: Rev. Lauren Lorincz
Date: June 26, 2016

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"Follow Me" Pilgrim Church UCC, Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Luke 9:51-62) June 26, 2016

Changing Perspectives: The Cleveland Curse and the Cleveland Cavaliers—Champions

-After a 52 year drought (the Cleveland Curse), there's finally a championship! 1.3 million people came to the parade on Wednesday (only 390,000 live in Cleveland!)

-Jim Brown of the Cleveland Browns (1964 champs) handed LeBron James the trophy

-The Cavs overcame adversity and media scrutiny, fired Head Coach David Blatt mid-season and promoted Assistant Coach Ty Lue to lead the team.

-Ty Lue changed the offense, quicker pace and more ball movement—yet the team fell back into old habits, Coach Lue had to keep encouraging them to use the new system.

-Two people quickly burst into tears after the amazing comeback (the only NBA team to ever win the title after being down 3-1)—LeBron James and Ty Lue

-Cavs fans are so happy! Don't know quite what to do with being champions, we're always underdogs, our sports miseries are famous (the drive, the fumble, the shot, etc.)!

-Connie Schultz (Pulitzer Prize author, married to U.S. Senator for Ohio Sherrod Brown) penned a column entitled, "Here in Cleveland, You Gotta Respect the Scars"

-New narrative for Northeast Ohio, Believeland will be re-released by ESPN to reflect our new story. From underdogs counted out after so many epic losses to champions redeemed by one of our own.

Old Habits are Hard to Break

-We are creatures of habit—habits help get us through the day, habitual behaviors are deeply ingrained, perspectives help us to make sense of the world around us.

-Many habits we've used just to be in the pew this Sunday morning—getting up, breakfast, shower, dressed. ---What happens when you're in a hotel or someone else's home? All of a sudden, things have changed!

- We see old habits/perspectives in our story with Jesus and the disciples

-James and John want to command fire from heaven to consume a Samaritan village that didn't receive Jesus well (Jesus rebukes them), grace hasn't sunk in yet.

-Don't understand Jesus' call to nonviolence, even against perceived enemies.

What does it mean to follow Jesus?[1]

-The first person Jesus meets along the road declares, "I will follow you wherever you go." (Luke 9:57)

-Jesus warns that those who choose to follow may not have a place to call home (physically or culturally.) Following Jesus wasn't a popular decision. What's right isn't always popular and what's popular isn't always right.

-Jesus tells the second person to follow him. The man wants to go and bury his father first.

-The third person volunteers to follow Jesus, "I will follow you, Lord" (Luke 9:61) but says that first he needs to say goodbye to people at his home.

-Jesus responds that if you look back, you're not fit for the Kingdom of God.

-Jesus' responses could be viewed as a rejection of family obligations and just harsh.

-Though the Way of Jesus encourages us to see the demands on our lives (including family responsibilities) in light of our commitment to Christ.

-Following Jesus isn't always easy: sometimes we do make sacrifices, sometimes we have to leave old habits behind or old perspectives in order to have new life in Christ.

-Our path as Christian disciples becomes identified by what we treasure, the priorities we set, and how we treat other people. Our path is about loving God, loving our neighbors, and loving ourselves.

[1] Richard J. Shaffer Jr. Pastoral Perspective of Luke 9:51-62, Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary, Year C, Volume 3.