

When I said, think about perceptions while I was reading that; they're very different perceptions than we have than how it I was meant when they were written. For example, when I said tonight I always thought Samaritans meant friend. In the first part of this reading today, James and John Are ready to call down fire on the Samaritans because they wouldn't pay attention to Jesus. They wouldn't prepare For him to enter their city. They wouldn't prepare to let him speak his word. They totally shut him off. Now being a Christian and being raised with the Bible and being raised that Jesus was so good, it doesn't make sense on why the Samaritans would instantly shut him down. Has a Pharisee already been there? Had they told him that they were going; that Jesus was such a terrible person that he did things on the Sabbath that he did. He healed Gentiles. He ate with Gentiles, he sat with sinners, with prostitutes, with tax collectors. Is that why they shunned against him? It might be an easy thing for us to recognize. But what we forget about a lot of times when we're talking about the Samaritans, is how poorly they were treated, how poorly they were isolated by the other Jews. Now there God is the same God. They came from the same families. They came from the same tribes. They were a part of Israel before the split, before it became the northern kingdom in Judea. They worshiped the same way that deduced him. But when the two kingdoms split and the Babylonians attacked and took over, they were left. They were left to be there. They were left to fend for themselves. Everybody that had been a part of Judea and been a part of Israel left them; just let them out. Let them go on their own and then, when the Persians let everybody back into Jerusalem, they shunned the Samaritans. Again, they made sure that they wouldn't marry within the Jewish faith, even though they were the same, even though their God was the same God. They were both children of Abraham. They were still pushed aside. For centuries, they worshiped at their own temples. The temples that they built when it was still the kingdom of Israel. And now these people are coming in and telling them that they know better, that the Samaritans need to go to Jerusalem to worship, to pay tribute, to hear the Messiah. I'd be angry, too.

In the second part of a reading, it sounds extreme. Jesus is telling a man that he can't really go bury his father. He's telling him let the dead bury the dead. It seems harsh from our perception of somebody. If we knew that somebody was going back to bury their father we'd be upset, wouldn't we? If we were told not to do something, if we were told, don't worry about it, you let them worry about it. You let them bury him. You're just going for my work. That's what it sounds like he's saying to us. That's what it sounds like, he's reading, because that's our perception. That's how our faith is. If there's somebody that has passed away, we know somebody else is going to be taking care of them. Somebody else is going to be paying tribute to them. Somebody else is going to be making sure that they're all together. The families are being taken care of. In this case, if the father was already dead, well, he'd already be home. You wouldn't be out wandering around. You wouldn't be saying that this is going to happen. He would already be there. So Jesus knows that his father isn't dead. His father might not even be sick, This is just an excuse that we make because that's what we do. As people we make excuses to get out of things, things that are uncomfortable things. We don't want to deal with it. It's easy to say, you know, maybe later.

Now, the first person that Jesus is talking to the person's all excited. He's like, I want to follow you, I want to be a part of you. I want to be a part of your mission and Jesus says that a fox has

a home, birds have a nest, but he doesn't have a home. That means that person's going to have to go with him. You're gonna have to travel together, they're gonna have to be in situations that aren't necessarily comfortable. And it's easy to say, well, you know, I'm, I'm here as long as we've got TV, as long as we've got internet, as long as we've got cell service. I'm right there with you. I gotta go camping. I got a bath in a creek. That's a little iffy. And the last person Jesus is telling him, it sounds hard again, right. He's telling him not to go say goodbye to his family. That's not what he's saying. This is to remind us of the story of Elisa. See, when Elijah went to Alicia, he said, follow me. Come with me and learn my weight and you should say to him that he wanted to go say goodbye to his family first. And Elijah, he did. He went back. Said goodbye. He celebrated. He slaughtered 12 oxen and had a feast. And then he burned his plow. He destroyed everything. So there was nothing for him to go home. He gave up everything to follow Jesus or I'm sorry to follow Elijah, I got a little head of myself there.

But Perception of these stories is different because of how we were brought up, how we were raised in the world. We live in the world we live in now is not the same world that we lived in two years ago, five years ago, 10 years ago, 20 years ago, it's not. And the world we live in tomorrow is going to be different than the world we went to bed with tonight.

We've seen a lot of things happening, and it makes it hard for us sometimes to understand what God's purpose is. But it isn't God's purpose. It isn't God doing these things. God is there to give us strength. He's there to help us through these things that make our lives difficult. We make our own lives difficult by our own choices. We make other people's lives difficult unnecessarily by our own choices, and we don't realize it. We don't take the time to perceive what somebody else does. We don't take the time to feel what they feel, to hear what they hear, to see what they see. As Christians, Jesus told us there are two things. There are two Commandments. Love no God above me, and treat your neighbor as you want to be treated. Love one another. So this, his whole teaching is about to love one another. We talked about that on Sunday. We talked about that last Wednesday. And I said, I made the joke. I gave up giving things up for Lent a long time ago. The purpose of giving things up, is to bring us closer to God. To remind us that there is nothing above him. That we don't worship money that we don't worship, tv shows movies, drugs, alcohol. We worship him. So this year I am going to give something up. I'm going to try. I'm going to try to do two things in my life. They'll bring me closer to God, and it isn't giving up something that I like because you're just going to fail. Every time you do that, but what I'm going to do is I'm going to cut back on my screen time. I obviously can't give up my screen time. I am going to cut back on my screen time. I must spend more time reading. That's been more time disconnecting. The other thing I'm going to do is start walking again. Walking around down the trail, to the park, walking from here to the church without my phone, without the other noises. Listening for that quiet moment that we talked about a couple weeks ago. That's silence, and you can really hear God speaking to you. That's what I'm going to give up. I'll try to get off all the noise. Just hear what he's saying to me, or we can do together.