

***Crossways International Handout for Gospel Readings—
June 6, 13, 20, 27 (2010)***

June 6, Pentecost 2: Luke 7:11-17

Introductory comments: The Gospels contain three accounts of Jesus raising the dead.

1. In **Mark** 5:21-24a, 35-43, Jesus raises *Jairus' daughter*. In the larger context of Mark 5, Jesus goes to the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee where he heals a Gentile man possessed with a multitude of demons (5:1-20a). He then returns to the west bank of the Sea of Galilee.

Jairus meets Jesus after He steps out of the boat. Jairus begs Jesus to come to his home—*quickly!* His daughter is at the point of death. However, some time is lost in this “rescue mission” because, on the way to Jairus’ home, Jesus has to deal with a woman who has been suffering from a menstrual disorder for 12 years. She touches the hem of Jesus’ outer garment in the hope of being cured—and *she is cured*. While Jesus spends time with the woman, Jairus’ daughter dies. However, Jesus proceeds on to Jairus’ home and restores his daughter to life.

2. In **Matthew’s account** of this incident, Jairus meets Jesus on the beach, tells Him that his daughter *has already died* and urges Jesus to come quickly. He adds, “Come and lay Your hand on her and she will live,” 9:18b.

3. **Luke’s account** of the raising of Jairus’ daughter reflects that in Mark. However, he (and only he) describes Jesus healing the widow’s son at Nain, 7:11-17.

4. **John** makes no reference to Jesus raising Jairus’ daughter or the widow’s son at Nain. However, he devotes nearly all of ch. 11 to describing Jesus’ raising of Lazarus—an event that results in the Jewish religious and political elite voting to have Jesus put to death.

In John 4, after Jesus speaks with a Samaritan woman at Sychar (near Mt. Gerizim, the Samaritan’s holy mountain), He goes to Cana where he is met by a Roman official (a Gentile) from Capernaum. The official begs Jesus to come with him to his home in Capernaum to heal his *son* who is at the point of death. Although Jesus heals the boy, He does so from a distance—while at Cana.

In **Luke 7:1-10**, Jesus goes to Capernaum where he heals the *servant* of a Roman centurion—again, from a distance.

7:11: After doing this, Jesus goes to Nain (7:11). He is accompanied by His disciples and a large crowd.

7:12: As Jesus approaches an entrance gate into Nain, He meets up with a funeral procession. A dead man is being carried out to a burial site. The dead man is the only son of a widow. A large crowd accompanies the woman. Her loss is a tragedy for her. She has already lost her husband, and has now lost her only son. This in turn means that she has lost her husband’s property. He had left it to the son, and now that the son is dead, it will be passed on to the nearest male relative. How is the woman to survive?

7:13: When Jesus sees the grieving, widowed mother, He has compassion for her and says, “Do not weep.”

7:14: Jesus then moves forward to touch the stretcher-like bier on which is the body of the son. When He does this, those carrying it stand still. Jesus then addresses the corpse of the dead son and says, “Young man, I say to you, rise.” When Jesus touches the bier on which the *dead body* lies, He renders Himself *ritually unclean!*

7:15: The dead man returns to life, sits up, and begins to speak. While he is doing this, Jesus gives him back to his mother. Note well! The woman not only gets back her son, but the son gets back the family property—which means that he will be able to support his mother throughout her remaining days.

7:16: Those who witness what has taken place are overcome with awe and glorify God. They say, “A great prophet has risen among us!” and “God has looked favorably on His people.”

7:17: Word about what has taken place spreads rapidly and widely. Although the incident took place in Galilee to the north, information about it spreads across Judea to the south and all the surrounding country.

But there is more. When the people shout that a “great prophet” has appeared among them, they recall a previous event when Elisha performed a similar miracle, 2 Kings 4:8-37. While Elisha was working in the vicinity of Shunem, a wealthy couple offered him food, and eventually a room in which to stay. There came the day when Elisha promised the wife (who was childless) that she would soon become pregnant and bear a son—which she did. Some years later when the son goes to his father out in the fields, he suffers severe headaches, is carried back to the family home and dies in his mother’s arms. The mother goes looking for Elisha and meets him in the vicinity of Mt. Carmel. Elisha then travels to the woman’s home, prays, and brings the dead son back to life. Because the raising of the woman’s son at Nain closely resembled the Lord’s miracle at Shunem, the crowd realized that a great prophet was among them.

But there is more. Shunem, where Elisha restored a young son to life, lay on the southeastern base of Mount Moreh. Jesus’ restored to life the son of a couple who resided in Nain. Nain lay on the northern base of Mount Moreh—just a few miles away from Shunem. Without doubt, the people of Nain would have made the geographical and theological connection. The two localities were close to each other, and the Lord had come to help them just as He had answered Elisha’s prayer at Shunem.

We do well to ask, “How might we have responded had we witnessed this remarkable event?” Overwhelmed with amazement, without a doubt! Today many people do all they can to hang on to life. They are prepared to spend thousands of dollars to soften the process of aging and to deal with the pain that the approach of death can bring. However, the only thing that can bring peace and hope is to know and believe that God already loves us, that He has forgiven us, and when time ends on earth, eternity in God’s glorious presence will begin and never end!

June 13, Pentecost 3: Luke 7:36–8:3

Many of the insights that follow are drawn from Dr. Kenneth Bailey’s book, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes* (IVP Academic, © 2008), pp. 239-260.

7:36: Simon, a Pharisee, invites Jesus to his home to dine with him and his friends. Why would he do that? Jesus had been proclaiming that God loves sinners. Simon and his friends do not agree with that belief. In their view of things, they badly need to offer Jesus some advice: *God cares for the righteous who keep the Jewish laws.*

Jesus accepts Simon's invitation, enters his house, and takes His place at the meal table. Jesus does not sit on a chair but reclines on a U-shaped sofa around a low, oblong table—referred to as a *triclinium*. In Jesus' day, meals were often followed by a *symposium*—a discussion on a topic of interest. As we might expect, rabbis and Pharisees focused on discussing Jewish laws.

7:37: At that time, rabbinic tradition urged people to open their homes to the rabbis for Torah discussions, and to invite outcasts within the local community to participate (cf. *Mishnah*, Abot 1:4-5). Still today in the Middle East, the poor sit on the floor around the walls at a feast, quietly listening to the table discussion. They are given food at the end of the meal—an action that brings honor to the host in that he has demonstrated his charitable nature.

Early in the piece, a woman (most likely a prostitute) enters the room where the meal is being served. There is good reason to believe that, earlier in the day, the woman had heard Jesus proclaim His message of God's forgiving grace for sinners. When she finds out where Jesus is to dine, she joins other outcasts and poor people sitting around the walls of the banquet room. She brings with her an alabaster jar of ointment.

7:38: However, the woman is shocked! She sees Simon snub Jesus. Although Simon offers his other guests the traditional welcome kiss, foot washing, and oil for their heads, he does not offer these things to Jesus. Possibly, his desire is to humiliate Jesus before both the other rabbis and the larger community represented by the outcasts in the hope that they will spread the word about how he has treated Jesus.

Although the woman is horrified and other poor people in the room are dismayed, Simon and friends quietly snigger and smirk, hoping that they can discredit this famous rabbi. After all, He has not been trained as they have, and they do not recognize Him as "one of us!" He must be put in His place!

The woman watches Jesus (*seemingly*) ignore the insult and recline at the table. She weeps! How can they treat this wonderful rabbi so rudely? What is she to do? How can she change things? Suddenly, she takes a very bold step. She kneels and uses her tears to carry out the foot-washing Simon had refused to provide. She pulls back her head covering and uses her hair to dry Jesus' feet. She then anoints them with her oil and kisses them again and again. If *Simon* will not show hospitality to his guest, *she will!* And so, a woman who has given herself to many men now dramatically symbolizes her exclusive love for Jesus. Before the eyes of all present, she expresses a bride-like commitment to Him alone!

7:39: Simon and his friends see the woman's actions as outrageous! After all, it was unusual to see a Jewish woman in public at all. The Jewish philosopher, Philo (20 BC–50AD), a contemporary of Jesus, wrote:

Let no woman busy herself about those things that are [outside the house], but let her cultivate solitude, and not be seen...in the sight of other men, except when it is necessary for her to go to the Temple (Spec. Laws III:169-171).

Women were rarely seen in public—much less their hair! If a Jewish wife went out publicly with flowing hair, her husband could divorce her and leave her financially destitute. The rabbis asked what justifies expelling and divorcing a woman, and answered:

*She who transgresses against the law of Moses and Jewish law....
And what is the Jewish law?
If she goes out with her hair flowing loose* (Mishnah, Ketubot 7:6).

The Pharisees are scandalized. Surely Jesus must know how sinful this woman is! They expect Jesus to recoil in disgust at this despicable creature and demand that Simon throw her out. It is the only “righteous” thing to do. No priest, Pharisee, or rabbi will have anything to do with a former prostitute. She is an outcast of the worst kind. Even being touched by her will cause ritual uncleanness.

If Jesus recoils from her touch, He will communicate rejection to a woman who has publicly humbled herself to honor Him, to thank Him for His forgiveness, and to express her total devotion to Him. And the end result will be that the woman is crushed and devastated. *What will Jesus do?*

7:40: Jesus *protects her* and *confronts the opposition party*. In doing this, He diverts the anger and outrage away from the woman to Himself! He tells Simon that He wants to discuss the implications of what has taken place.

7:41–43: Jesus tells Simon the parable of the Two Debtors. Still fuming, Simon listens. The storyline of the parable is as follows: A certain creditor has lent money to two debtors—to the first, 500 denarii, to the second, 50 denarii. (A denarius is a day’s wage.) Later, the creditor forgives both debts. After telling the parable, Jesus asks Simon (and his guests), “Which of the debtors will love the creditor more?” Simon answers, “*I suppose the one for whom he cancelled the greater debt.*”

7:44–46: The trap is sprung! Jesus applies Simon’s answer in ways that are subtle and dramatic. The debtor who had owed the most is like this woman whose “large debt” (prostitution) has been forgiven. Little wonder, then, that she expresses her love and gratitude so passionately.

The debtor who owes little is like...who? Although Jesus does not actually say it, He intimates that Simon’s small debt (snubbing Jesus) is also forgiven. Then Jesus goes a radical step further. Rabbinic parables often spoke of God as holy creditor and people as sinful debtors. Who is the creditor in this parable? Jesus! He forgave both the woman and Simon! He places *Himself* in the role of God as creditor. He freely forgives the sinful debtor—whether blatant Law-Breaker or punctilious Law-Keeper! *Both* stand in need of divine mercy!

Jesus confronts Simon with some blunt reminders. When Jesus came to his house, Simon did not offer Him the following customary signs of welcome and respect:

- * Water for foot-washing;
- * Kiss of welcome;
- * Anointing of Jesus’ head with oil.

Although Simon had hoped to shame Jesus by denying Him these welcoming gestures, Jesus now shames Simon! Although Simon and his colleagues despised the woman whose life Jesus had transformed, she provided Jesus with the very things that Simon had denied Him.

7:47–49: The woman showed much love to Jesus because He had shown her an abundance of love. Simon and his friends had shown Jesus little love because they felt they were beyond needing His love or God’s forgiveness. After confronting Simon, Jesus assures the woman that her sins have been forgiven. Jesus’ opponents question Jesus’ authority to forgive sins. After all, only God can forgive sins!

7:50: The narrative closes with Jesus saying to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

June 20, Pentecost 4: Luke 8:26-39

In Luke 8:22-25, we read of Jesus asking His disciples to take Him by boat from the west coast to the southeast coast of the Sea of Galilee. Without doubt, the disciples are disturbed. The region to which Jesus wishes to go is not Jewish. *Gentiles* live there—and they have *pigs*. However, they set sail, but along the way experience a windstorm, awaken a sleeping Jesus, and beg Him to save their lives. Jesus stills the storm—and all is well. However, the disciples wonder who this Person is who can calm storms at sea!

8:26: When the travelers arrive at their destination in the region of the Gerasenes, only Jesus gets out of the boat!

8:27: As soon as Jesus disembarks, He meets a man who is possessed with demons. The man is naked, and lives, not in a house, but among the tombs.

8:28,29: As soon as the man sees Jesus, he falls down before Him and shouts at the top of his voice, “What have you to do with me? Do not torment me!” In doing this, he addresses Jesus in a remarkable way: “Jesus, Son of the Most High God.” Amazing! Although this man is a Gentile and demon-possessed, he addresses Jesus in a way that even the disciples do not “see” at this point in the narrative.

It is significant that in Mark’s narrative, the first thing Jesus does when beginning His ministry to the *Jews* is that He casts a demon out of a man in a synagogue, Mark 1:21-28. And the first thing He does when beginning His ministry to the *Gentiles* is cast a host of demons out of a man, Mark 5:1-20.

In Luke’s narrative, when Jesus begins His teaching ministry among the *Jewish people*, He has to deal with fierce opposition from His hearers in a synagogue, and with those who are demon possessed, 4:16-31. And the first thing He deals with when beginning His ministry to the *Gentiles* is described in the present pericope.

The man had been having a bad time for a long time. An unclean spirit had seized him many times, and he was kept under guard. Although he was bound with chains and shackles, he would break them and the demon would then drive him out into the wilds.

8:30, 31: When Jesus asks him for his name, the man replies “Legion”—indicating that he is possessed by a host of demons. These demons beg Jesus not to order them to go back into the abyss—the place where demons dwelt.

8:32,33: The demons beg Jesus to allow them to enter a large herd of pigs on a nearby hillside. Jesus grants them permission to do that. The demons then leave the man, enter into the herd of pigs, rush down the steep bank into the Sea of Galilee, and are drowned!

8:34-36: There are other swineherds in the vicinity. When they see what is taking place, they run back to their homes and villages to tell others what they have seen. People go to where the exorcism had occurred, see Jesus, and the man whom Jesus healed sitting at Jesus’ feet—clothed and in his right mind. And they are afraid. The herdsmen who had witnessed Jesus’ exorcizing of the man tell the new arrivals what they had seen Jesus do.

8:37: The crowd experiences great fear, and begs Jesus to leave their region. (Little wonder that the people who live in the region are disturbed; they have lost their pigs—a major source of their income!) So Jesus returns to the disciples’ boat, and returns to the vicinity of Capernaum on the west bank of the Sea of Galilee.

8:38,39: Before Jesus and the disciples set sail, the man begs Jesus to let him remain with the One Who has healed him. However, Jesus tells the man to return to his home and tell everyone what God has done for him. Indeed, God carried out the healing, but that God was present in the flesh-and-blood person of Jesus.

The man does what Jesus asks him to do. He returns to his home city and proclaims to all who live there what Jesus has done for him. And so Jesus' ministry to the Gentiles gets under way!

A little later (Mark 8:1-10), Jesus feeds 4,000 Gentiles in this same region—Gentiles who gather around Jesus. Did they come as a result of the witness of the man Jesus healed?

There are parallels between this incident and the Exodus from Egypt under Moses. In the Exodus event, the enemies who drown are Egyptian soldiers. In this healing miracle, the enemies who drown are demons—the real opponents of Jesus' Messianic Kingdom!

June 27, Pentecost 5: Luke 9:51-62

Jesus faced constant political pressure as He carried out His ministry. He resisted any move to make him a king. Although He came to establish a kingdom, that kingdom was completely different from anything the world could devise or establish. It was an upside-down, back-to-front Kingdom in which greatness is measured, not by how much we accumulate for ourselves, but by how much we give of ourselves in the service of others. There is good reason to believe that Jesus used Capernaum in Galilee as a base for His ministry so that He could readily and rapidly slip across the Jordan into the territory of Philip, who was more moderate than the brutal Herod Antipas (who ruled Galilee and Perea) and less likely to do Him physical harm.

Luke 9:51 reads: “When the days drew near for Jesus to be received up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.”

This verse marks a geographical turning point in Jesus' ministry. Although He was born in Bethlehem and presented in the Temple when eight days old, and although apparently Joseph and Mary regularly took Him to Jerusalem for the annual Passover observance (Luke 2:41), Jesus kept away from Jerusalem during His ministry. If anything, Jerusalem played the role of the city of opposition, the city of His enemies. Its political and religious leaders were opposed to His Person and ministry, and would eventually spearhead the move to do away with Him. Hence, when Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem, He knew that He was going to His death, Luke 13:33-35!

9:52: Those whom Jesus sent on ahead to prepare the way for Him went first to a village of the Samaritans, 9:52.

9:53: However, the Samaritans would not permit Jesus and the disciples to pass through their territory because He was heading for Jerusalem. They insisted that the only legitimate place for worship was Mt. Gerizim in Samaria, while the Jews argued that the only legitimate place was Mt. Zion in Jerusalem. The Samaritans' refusal to allow Jesus to pass through was a protest on religious grounds.

9:54-56: Jesus rejected any notion of punishing the Samaritans for their attitude; see also John 4.

9:57-62: Soon after Jesus changes course and sets out for Jerusalem by another route, He encounters three men. The *first* offers to follow Jesus. Jesus calls the *second* to follow him. The *third* offers to follow Jesus—but with a certain proviso.

The six verses describing the three encounters contain statements that initially mystify western readers who usually feel a certain sympathy for the second and third persons mentioned.

The second person *seemingly* says he will follow Jesus, but his father has just died and he must attend to funeral arrangements prior to joining Jesus.

The third person *seemingly* says that he will follow Jesus, but he would like to take just a little time to say goodbye to his family before doing so. These seem to be reasonable requests. However, the *apparent* meaning is not the *real* meaning.

9:57,58: As they were going along the road, someone said to Jesus, “I will follow you wherever you go.” And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.”

The first person, a volunteer, expresses a willingness to follow Jesus and go anywhere with Him, but has not considered the cost. His understanding of what is involved is shallow. Jesus might well have said to him:

It is easy to make big promises, if you think that only little is involved. You say you will go with me wherever I go? Good! But you must understand that I can offer you no salary, no benefits package, and no retirement plan. I myself do not even own a bed to sleep on—and I cannot promise you one either. What goes for me must go for you as well!

But Jesus does not say that. Rather, He answers with remarkable but powerful brevity:

Foxes have dens.
Birds have roosts.
But the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.

Jesus uses verbal symbols in this passage—and with good reason. Still today, captive people cannot speak openly but must resort to the use of verbal symbols. The people in Palestine in Jesus' day needed no reminders to do this; the memory of Herodian terror remained fresh in their minds. No one in his right mind dared openly criticize Rome, for Roman and Herodian spies were everywhere.

The term “fox” was a symbol of the Ammonites, who, although related to the Israelites, were looked on as enemies of Israel. Similarly, the family of Herod the Great (Idumeans, descendants of the Edomites) was a racially mixed one. First century Palestinians would have understood the implications of Jesus' comment very well. In Luke 13:32, Jesus refers to Herod Antipas as “that fox.”

“Birds have roosts” is a more appropriate translation than “birds have nests,” for while birds have nests for only part of the year, they have roosts throughout the year. Furthermore, “birds of the air” is used in intertestamental literature as a term for the Gentile nations. In Jesus' day, when a Roman legion was on the move, someone marched ahead of the group holding a staff on the top of which was an eagle.

The sense of the saying may be: “Everybody is at home in Israel's land except the true Israel. The birds of the air (the Roman overlords) and the foxes (the Edomite interlopers) hold power and exercise control. The true Israel is disinherited by them. However, if you throw in your lot with Me, you join the ranks of the dispossessed, and you must be prepared to serve God under these conditions.”

The call to follow a rejected, suffering Son of Man would have come as a shock to a first century Jew. After all, Daniel 7 did not make reference to suffering and hardship. It assured the Jewish people (“the son of man,” “the saints of the Most High”) that they would soon attain ascendancy over the nations of the world, and those nations would serve them forever.

We might, then, sum up the general thrust of Jesus' statement to this first candidate for discipleship as follows:

If you want power and influence, follow the fox who manages his affairs with cunning. Go to the birds who feather their nests. Do you really want to follow the rejected Son of Man?

We are not told the young man's response. In every age there are those who glibly commit themselves to following Jesus without seriously reflecting on the price people must pay for following a suffering, rejected Lord.

9:59,60: To another Jesus said, “Follow me.” But the man responded, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.” But Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”

The second person does not offer his services to Jesus. Rather, Jesus seeks to recruit him with “Follow me.” The tense of the verb Jesus uses (in the original language) in recruiting him suggests: “Start a new action! Get involved with Me—now and full-time!”

The man responds, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” The response is often misunderstood. Some think the father has just died or is about to die, and that the man is seeking just a little time to attend to his burial. This is not what is meant. If it were so, even from a common sense point of view, we would have to ask: “If his father has recently died, why is he not back there taking care of family affairs and funeral matters then and there?”

What the man is really saying is: “Let me go and serve my father. My first obligation is to my father—while his father remains alive. After he dies I will bury him—and then I will be free to follow You.” He wants to defer following Jesus to a distant future point in time when his father will die as an old man—and who knows when? Little does he know that in a very short time Jesus himself will give up His spirit!

This man's response reflects an attitude that still prevails today in the Middle East: A son has the duty to remain at home until his father dies. Then, and only then, can he consider other options. What is at stake here is peer pressure. The man's response to Jesus amounts to this: “Surely you do not expect me to violate the expectations of my community?”

9:61: Another said, “I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at home.” Although this would-be disciple rather brashly offers to follow Jesus, he has a precondition. On first hearing, the request seems legitimate enough. Who would not want to say goodbye to loved ones prior to taking up some new career, some new mission in life? But this is not the issue. The verb, “take leave of,” implies getting family permission.

Again, across the Middle East still today, the one who leaves asks permission to go. For example: an engineer in his forties will go from the large city where he is working to his village birthplace to get his father's permission to undertake foreign travel, a job change, or a business venture. Although the granting of permission may be ceremonial and the son runs his own life, a sign of respect is involved. So the engineer poses his question and adds, “With your permission.” His father grants permission with responses such as: “May you go in safety. May you go in peace. God go with you!” Little wonder, then, that many in the Middle East experience a degree of shock when

they learn that Jesus' claim on people supersedes the claim of family—and that Jesus made this claim on people *when He was only about thirty!*

The one who wants to greet his family has his heart tied to his family—where the authority of the father is supreme. The man is saying, “I will follow you, Lord, but the authority of my father is higher than your authority. I must have his permission before I venture out!” Everyone listening knows that the father will refuse the son permission to wander off on some questionable enterprise.

9:62: Jesus responds, “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.” Here, Jesus draws on farming practices in the Palestine of His day in responding to the third individual. Then, as now, the plow is of light construction. The plowman uses his left hand to hold the plow, to regulate the depth of cut, and to lift it over rocks and stones. With his right hand, he directs his unruly ox out front, using a six-foot goad tipped with an iron spike to do so. He must also look between the hindquarters of the ox to make sure that the furrow he is plowing will be straight. If he lets himself be distracted and looks around or behind himself, the result will be a crooked furrow.

In the Middle East, getting seed into the ground involves four plowings. In the *first*, big furrows are made to break up the soil. In the *second*, smaller furrows are made to provide proper drainage. In the *third*, close set furrows are plowed, without intervening bands. The seed is then sown. In the *fourth*, the seed sown by hand is covered.

Obviously, if the plowman is to carry out this sequence properly, he must give his undivided attention to the task at hand. If he lets himself get distracted, the plow might catch on a rock and cause the ox to expend a lot of unnecessary energy—and perhaps break the plow's blade in the process. Distraction might also result in plowing previously plowed soil and destroying the field's drainage system or its potential to absorb water. It might also result in newly planted seed being left exposed to birds.

The Central Point of the Parable

The Talmud states that a father and his son, or a master and his disciple, are regarded as one individual. The issue at stake in the trio of encounters is the nature of the relationship that Jesus wants to exist between Himself as Master and Teacher, and His disciples and students. Jesus insists that loyalty to His Kingdom and its all-consuming demands supersede all other loyalties, including loyalty to family.

Becoming a disciple of Jesus is not “signing up for the course” to get a little information. It is the cementing of a lifelong relationship to a Person. Jesus' authority takes precedence over all other relationships. The person who always wants to look back over the shoulder to check on family or other whims is judged useless in the kingdom of God.

Jesus' message is, “Eyes out front! Eyes on Me—and no one else. Follow Me full-time.”

BELIEVING IN JESUS—OR FOLLOWING JESUS

(Although what follows has been quoted in previous studies, its message reflects that of some of the pericopes analyzed above.)

Ernest Campbell, who once served as pastor of Riverside Church in New York City, wrote the following:

“It began innocently enough—a friend recommending a book by Jon Sobrino. The Salvadoran

Jesuit blew most of my ducks out of the water. He threw a hat down on my scrabble board and messed up many of my combinations. He forced me to contend for the ground that I had claimed. The question that Jon Sobrino put to me I must share with you: 'Are you following Jesus, or believing in Christ?'

"Plunge into the Gospels anywhere and you will likely find Jesus asking someone to follow. The Greek verb is *akaloutheo*. It represents a dominant motif. Why, then, do we hear so little about following Jesus in the church today? I've been in, with, and around the church for more than 50 years. Not when I was in the communicants' class; not when I joined the church; not when I became a candidate for the ministry; not when I was ordained; and never in any of my services of installation. Always the questions have dealt with belief. 'Do you believe in God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? Do you believe in the veracity of the Scriptures and the Westminster Confession? Do you believe in the unity and purity of the church?'

"'Do you *believe in Christ*?' It isn't hard to answer that. What is wanted is an affirmative response to treasured propositions about the Second Person of the Trinity. But when someone asks, 'Are you *following Jesus*?', this can get to be expensive. This question has to do with my lifestyle, my attitudes, my values, my surrender.

"If I'm following Jesus, why am I such a good insurance risk? If I'm following Jesus, why, when I have done my giving, have I so much left over for myself? If I'm following Jesus, why do my closets bulge when so many are unclothed? If I'm following Jesus, why do I have so many friends among the affluent and so few among the poor? If I'm following Jesus, why do I have so much privacy in a world that is starved for love? If I'm following Jesus, why am I tempted to overeat in a world in which so many beg for bread? If I'm following Jesus, why am I getting on so well in a world that marked Him out for death?

"Are you following Jesus or believing in Christ? Unfair, you say; the two are inseparable. Theoretically, yes, but pragmatically, no. We separate them all the time. If we must, let us err on the side of *following*. For one can believe without following, but one cannot follow without believing."