Abide in Me

Mentored by the Master

Discipleship in Real Time

Loudonville COMMUNITY CHURCH

Volume 11 - Number 25 **The Week of May 17, 2026**

The Community of Jesus

The Kingdom is Bigger than You Think

Luke 9:49–56

As we reach the final "official" Growth Group week of the season, thank you for prioritizing both your pursuit of Jesus and your commitment to community this year. In a hurried world, choosing to gather consistently around God's Word, prayer, and fellowship is no small thing.

In this passage, the disciples stumble in two revealing ways, and both failures rise from the same root: pride. First, they try to stop a man ministering in Jesus' name simply because he does not belong to their circle. Then, when a Samaritan village refuses to welcome Jesus, James and John, the "Sons of Thunder," are ready to rain fire from heaven upon them. The disciples are still imagining a kingdom built around themselves instead of around Christ. Their hearts are still too small and narrow.

Jesus corrects their vision. He teaches them that His kingdom is larger than their tribe and that His mission advances not through revenge, but through mercy. As Jesus sets His face toward Jerusalem and the shadow of the cross grows nearer, He reveals what true greatness in His kingdom looks like: humility instead of pride, and patience instead of antipathy. This passage invites us to look honestly beneath the surface of our own hearts. Can we rejoice when God works outside our circle? How do we respond when people reject the gospel or oppose us? Jesus is forming a community marked not by narrowness or outrage, but by the same mercy He Himself will display at the cross.

> [49] John answered, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he does not follow with us." [50] But Jesus said to him, "Do not stop him, for the one who is not against you is for you."
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> [51] When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. [52] And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him. [53] But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. [54] And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" [55] But he turned and rebuked them. [56] And they went on to another village.

OBSERVATION *(What does the passage say and how does it say it?)*

As you read the passage this week, mark the text using the following prompts:

- Place a † over every reference to Jesus.
- Circle the disciples mentioned in this passage.
- In the left margin of verse 54 write, "Sons of Boanerges (Mark 3:17)."
- Box every statement that manifests pride, exclusion, or vindictiveness.
- Double underline every statement that reveals mercy, patience, or humility.
- Put an * beside verse 51 and note in the margin why it is such a major turning point in Jesus' ministry.

In one sentence, summarize the attitude of the disciples in vv. 49–50.

In one sentence, summarize the attitude of Jesus in vv. 49–56.

INTERPRETATION *(What does the passage mean?)*

1. Why do you think John and the disciples were bothered by the man casting out demons in Jesus' name? Is it significant that the disciples had just failed to cast out a demon? (see Luke 9:37-43).

2. What does the phrase "he does not follow with us" reveal about the disciples' hearts?

3. Jesus says, "Do not stop him, for the one who is not against you is for you." What does Jesus mean? What does He not mean?

4. How does this passage challenge tribalism or exclusivism in the church today?

5. Why is Luke 9:51 such an important transition in Jesus' ministry? What does it mean that Jesus "set his face to go to Jerusalem"?

6. Why did the Samaritan village reject Jesus?

7. Why do James and John want to call down fire from heaven? Why does Jesus rebuke them?

APPLICATION *(How does the passage apply to our lives?)*

1. What do these two scenes teach us about the kind of community Jesus is building?

2. Why do we sometimes struggle to rejoice when God uses someone outside our circle or preferred style? Why?

3. Why does failure sometimes make a person more controlling instead of humble?

4. Why do we tend to see people more as enemies to defeat than people to love and reach? In what ways do Christians today have a "call down fire" mentality? Where does this come from?

5. What would it look like for you to reflect the patience and mercy of Jesus toward people who reject you or disagree with you?

6. How does Jesus setting His face toward Jerusalem deepen your understanding of His love for sinners?

Abide Practice This Week

Spend time praying for:

- A faithful ministry outside your normal circle. Ask God to bless their gospel work.
- Someone who has rejected, criticized, or opposed you. Ask God to help you love them with the mercy of Christ.

Then meditate on Philippians 1:18:

"What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice."

Sermon Notes*: The Kingdom is Bigger than You Think*

Luke 9:49–56