

NO PLAN B
September 24, 2017 –Luke 9: 57-62
The Church of the Covenant

If you really want to accomplish Plan A, make certain there is no Plan B in your heart. When the Spartans came to attack Corinth in the Peloponnesian War they burned their ships. So the only way to return to Sparta was dead on your shield or in Corinthian ships seized as a prize of war. There was NO Plan B. Victory was Plan A and there was NO Plan B. Chuck Noll, revered coach of the Steelers always told that story. Today's world we keep our options open. I will be in a relationship with you but I won't marry you because maybe, just maybe this won't work out or someone better will come along. Nope, NO PLAN B is the way God sets it up. OR I can't commit to come to church on Sunday because maybe a better invitation might come along for a Steelers Tailgate Party I might want to attend. Nope, don't ever treat God like He's PLAN B or when you stand before Him at the pearly gates He might tell you to go through DOOR B instead of DOOR A, if you catch my drift. God requires us to hold HIM FIRST in our heart, not second. In today's world our lives are a swirling mass of confusing, contradictory, chaotic options where we wait till the very last second to commit. I think most of the stress in life today is because of that. Nope. Stick with your commitments. No Plan B with the Almighty.

I remember in that heady time when I felt called to go into the Gospel ministry, I was in law school, and I had such a great deal of clarity about so many things. It is not always so in life, but when God is unmistakably calling you to something, there is a clarity HE brings. As I was devouring scripture because it seemed to me the Lord was speaking through almost every Word, I read this passage that I read to you today from the gospel of Luke. I was rivetted to attention by the words: *"No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."* (Luke 9: 62) No one who puts their hand to the work of ministry and looks back is fit. No one who decides to follow Jesus and looks back wistfully on their former life is fit. No one who sets their life on the path of HE who is the way and the truth and the life and looks back is fit...because their heart is divided. They love something else as much as Jesus. They have a PLAN B lurking somewhere in their heart. To be successful at PLAN A you have to give up PLAN B. The Spartans knew this; Chuck Noll knows this; Jesus knows this; do we know this? So there I am in my third year of law school, about to achieve my life's goal up to that point in time, and I feel called to go into ministry. Should I therefore complete law school? Or set my face exclusively for ministry? And I read this Bible verse: *"No one who puts his hand to plow and looks back..."* Wow, Lord, You are calling me not just to go into ministry. Wow, Lord, You are calling me to give up my plan for my life. You are calling me to leave law school, in my third and final year, right before my final finals, with two weeks to go. Wow. I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back, no turning back. You are asking me to burn my bridges behind me. I don't know why, but I know, Lord, that You are. So I withdrew from law school. And a lot of people thought I was an idiot. My Father thought I was an idiot. Why not just complete law school? What's the harm in that? No, I am to burn that bridge. I am to follow Jesus. I am to wholeheartedly throw myself into ministry. And my second year at Princeton Seminary, when Greek and Hebrew were looming large for me, and the temptation of getting a real job was perking around my heart, and one of my best friends in seminary who had graduated from law school left to take a high paying position in California, and then and there I suddenly understood why I was to leave law school before graduation. It would have been tempting to look back. It would have been tempting to get a real job. I might have left. I might have set my hand to the plow and looked back. It would have been tempting to have Plan B to fall back on. With God there is NO Plan B.

By the way, this passage is some of the hardest sayings Jesus ever says. I don't think HE really asks us not to bury our dead Father, or to break off all ties to our families. I think this is a rhetorical device that

Jesus uses to force us to think whether our heart really is divided where He is concerned. Is our heart and mind filled with many Plan B's instead of following Him? Is He our Plan A or not?

I think as background for this NT story is the Old Testament story of Lot and his family fleeing from Sodom and Gomorrah. They are told not to look back no matter what else happens. And we know the story, as Lot's wife is fleeing she looks back and is turned into a pillar of salt. We've all read the cute little story of a kid being asked about what happened to Lot's wife and the kid responds, "She was a ball of fire by night and a pillar of salt by day" Whatever that means. But don't condemn Lot's wife, please. I mean, her friends from her neighborhood were there; her house was there; her memories all there; her life was there. Wouldn't we also be tempted to look back, almost with curiosity and nostalgia, looking back, looking back wistfully on what was behind? Of course we would; it is our humanity. But looking back, means we really do believe there is a Plan B.

In a way, I'm a conservative in the best sense of that word. Which is to say, I want to conserve what is best about the church. I had a great upbringing in my church growing up and I want those who follow after me to have that same or similar experience. Because it has value, value to me, and I believe value to those who follow after me. I do love the church. I do love things like stained glass windows and pipe organs, and youth groups and Christmas pageants, and the decently and in order way we Presbyterians do everything by committee. I love these things, sometimes a little too much. But I know something and it is this. The "conservation" of the church comes not by trying to preserve it. It comes by following Jesus. It comes by throwing ourselves wholeheartedly into keeping our eyes fixed on Him, the author and perfecter of our faith. Plan B is trying to conserve all this stuff. Plan A is following Jesus. Plan B is nostalgia. Plan A is setting all we are and have in service to the Lord and His agenda for our lives. Plan A is looking forward; Plan B is looking back. I honestly believe that when we follow the Lord as our PLAN A with all our heart and mind and strength that then He will also keep the best of all that has been, He will preserve those things which were built upon the solid rock of faith in HIM.

Looking back, nostalgia, wistfully thinking about the way the church used to be, doesn't build a church. Vital encounters with Jesus builds a church. Disciples wholeheartedly following HIM build a church. Nostalgia is looking back, it is PLAN B. With God there is only PLAN A, His plan; there is NO Plan B.

I once served a church that really loved the old maroon hymnals. I really love the old maroon hymnals. They were the hymnals my home church used when I was growing up. It seems they found the last 400 copies of that hymnal in a warehouse and bought them and stored them in the church basement just so they would never ever have to use a new or different hymnal. Whatever that was, it was nostalgia. It was looking back. It was trying to preserve the church and its values by PLAN B.

Our Plan A is disciples deciding to follow Jesus. I have decided to follow Jesus, goes the old hymn. I have decided to follow Jesus. I have decided to follow Jesus. To turning back. No turning back. With God there is NO PLAN B. Amen and Amen.

*By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, Pennsylvania
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*