

The 4 Gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John – wonderfully present the good news that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, left heaven, to be the Lamb of God, here on earth. He would rescue sinners, like us, and give us eternal life instead of the eternal punishment we deserve.

- Matthew is the one who reminds us that Jesus is the Messiah.
- Mark pictures Jesus as the Servant.
- Luke, the doctor, presents Jesus as the Great Physician and Savior.
- While John highlights Jesus as the Son of God.

In today’s lesson from Luke, we’re told that Jesus **“was determined to go to Jerusalem.”** Literally, **“he set his face,”** on Jerusalem. He knew why he was going there. Jesus was completely focused on being the Savior, and nothing was going to stand in his way.

Jerusalem was the city of destiny for Jesus.

- Here, he would greet an adoring and palm-waving crowd.
- Here, he would establish a meal we still enjoy to this day.
- Here, he would have a prayer vigil in a garden with his closest friends.
- Here, he would be executed on a cross by an angry mob.
- Here, he would rise, alive and well, from the grave.
- Here, he would ascend to his rightful spot, a heavenly throne.

According to God the Father’s schedule, Jesus’ time up north in Galilee had come to an end. He would head south to Jerusalem to finish God’s rescue plan for sinners. As he does, **“Look at the Face of Jesus.”**

I’d like to reread Luke’s words: **When the days were approaching for him to be taken up, Jesus was determined to go to Jerusalem. He sent messengers ahead of him. They went and entered a Samaritan village to make preparations for him.**

But the people did not welcome him, because he was determined to go to Jerusalem. When his disciples James and John saw this, they said, “Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven to consume them?” But he turned and rebuked them. Then they went to another village.

From little on, Jesus knew his purpose.

- When he was 12, he told his parents when they found him in the temple: **“Didn’t you know I must be about my Father’s work?”**
- When Jesus came to be baptized in the Jordan River, John the Baptist correctly identified him as: **“The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”**
- Jesus told Nicodemus during their late-night visit: **“Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up.”** He was describing his crucifixion on the cross.
- In our lesson he needed to remind his disciples: **“For the Son of Man did not come to destroy people’s souls, but to save them.”**

So, when Jesus made this final trip to Jerusalem, he wasn’t a tourist to see the sights of the Holy City. He wasn’t a spectator to observe a religious festival. He wasn’t going there to receive a royal crown. He was going there to be the sacrifice and substitute for sinners! **He was determined to go to Jerusalem** to die for you and me. You could see it in his face.

This was not an easy journey for him. He would make this journey alone. Yes, he had his disciples with him, but they didn’t understand what was going to happen. Peter tried to stop him from making a huge mistake. He was facing Jerusalem alone, but he kept right on going!

The more you read and study his journey, the more wonderful it becomes. Walking with Jesus through the pages of your Bible, or a book of devotions, he’s constantly thinking about you, only you.

If you knew you were going to die a painful death on two timbers of Roman torture, would you be thinking about others? Hardly! We'd be feeling sorry for ourselves.

But not Jesus! He set his face. He was determined. Nothing ... not the devil's temptations, not the disciples lack of understanding ... would keep him from his goal – salvation for sinners and rescue from hell.

That's Luke's message. Jesus is a friend and Savior! He's never too busy to listen to your problems and help you with life's burdens. He's never far away. He knows your needs and helps you with them!

There are going to be times in your life when God calls you to make a journey, to do something others may not understand. And you may even have to do it alone. At a time like that, it would be easy to head in the opposite direction, like Jonah. It would be easy to say: *"I've had enough. I'm tired and worn-out. I'm fed-up and frustrated."*

When those thoughts interrupt your life and interfere with your faith, the best thing you can do is quit staring at yourself and get your eyes back on your Savior. **Look at the Face of Jesus!** He can help you on your journey. He can bring blessings into your life, right along with his promises! Draw strength from these powerful promises:

- **"I will comfort you and heal you."**
- **"I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."**
- **"I know the plans I have for you."**
- **"I will never drive away whoever comes to me."**
- **"I will give you rest."**
- **"I will come back and take you to be with me."**

He wants you to hold on to his promises, while holding him to his promises!

A not so funny thing happened as Jesus and his disciples left Galilee heading directly south through Samaria instead of going around to get to Jerusalem. Over the years a deep hatred had developed between the Samaritans and the Jews. That's why the messengers Jesus sent to get things

ready in Samaria got such an icy reception. They refused to show Jesus and his disciples any hospitality.

Jesus' ministry began with rejection by his hometown folks. He faced more rejection as he made his way to the capital city. Rejection couldn't stop him in Galilee and it won't in Samaria, either.

But when James and John found out about it, they wanted to unleash a fireball from heaven with a great big on this Samaritan village. This seems out of character for someone like John, who's known as the *"Apostle of Love,"* and wrote: **"If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen."**

Anger issues aren't the first thing that comes to mind when we think of James and John. But there must have been a reason Jesus nicknamed them the **"Sons of Thunder"**? And why would they think they could do this? Earlier in Luke, Jesus had turned his disciples loose to teach and preach and perform miracles on their own. They did! They healed diseases and sicknesses. They drove out demons. They experienced real power from on high. Why not put it to use on some foolish people who refused to roll out the welcome mat?

Their anger did get the best of them. Imagine the look Jesus gave them when he rebuked them. Since it wasn't the first time Jesus rebuked them, they remembered the look on Jesus' face!

Do we have some James and John in us? We're lying if we say "no." That's one of the reasons Jesus couldn't let anything side-track him.

- **"Look at the Face of Jesus!"** He was determined to go to Jerusalem for you.
- **"Look at the Face of Jesus!"** It was tear-stained and blood-stained to forgive your sins on Calvary's cross.
- **"Look at the Face of Jesus!"** He sends you on your way with these comforting and familiar words: **"The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord look on with his favor and give you peace."** Amen.