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Lent 5B
Sunday, March 29, 2009
Gospel: John 12: 20-36

Follow Me

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. ²¹They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." ²²Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. ²³Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ²⁵Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

"Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. ²⁸Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." ²⁹The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." ³⁰Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. ³¹Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. ³²And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." ³³He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die. ³⁴The crowd answered him, "We have heard from the law that the Messiah remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?" ³⁵Jesus said to them, "The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you. If you walk in the darkness, you do not know where you are going. ³⁶While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of light." After Jesus had said this, he departed and hid from them.

Have you ever seen a really long train?

I am always amazed to see just how long they can be. Did you know that the longest train ever stretched almost 5 miles (7.83km)? It had 8 engines that pulled almost 700 cars. Now that's one big train!

The thing that's always fascinated me about watching those really long trains is how - sooner or later - all of the cars follow the same path as the first engine as it pulls them down the tracks. It's like follow the leader. If the front engine turns in one direction or another, all the rest of the cars will turn in just that same spot. (Note: Depending on the number of children in your group you may wish to model this concept here by having the children form a "train" that follows you in a line.)

In today's Gospel lesson Jesus says that "whoever serves me must follow me - and where I am, there my servant will be also."

It's sort of like our train, isn't it? Jesus is telling us that the way to lead lives that will be pleasing to God is to follow his example.

We can't follow Jesus in the same way that the train cars do, can we? He's not here with us to watch and copy every day (following Jesus takes more thinking) - but we can still follow his example by leading our lives in ways that follow the examples he set for us in the Bible: by caring for those who need us, by being kind and generous, showing our love and sharing - when we do those things we're letting Jesus be our leader...just like those big locomotives that pull the train down the tracks.

It's not always easy. But the good news is that we have chances to follow every day. Why don't we make a train sound as we get ready to pray. Are you ready?

TOOT, TOOT!

Let's pray.

Dear God,

We thank you for the example and leadership of your son, Jesus. Help us to follow in his footsteps during the week ahead.

Amen

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