

Nearly 40 years ago, there was a movie called Gumball Rally
It was about a secret... and completely illegal... cross-country race

Between a Cobra, a Camaro, a Porsche, a Rolls Royce,
A Mercedes, a Kawasaki motorcycle, a Jaguar (that never started)
and a Ferrari...

whose Italian driver began the race
by ripping the rear-view mirror from the windshield... and saying
The first-a rule of Italian driving...
What's-a behind-a me is-a not important!

And in our gospel reading, we heard something similar...
No one who puts a hand to the plow (or takes the wheel)
And looks back...
Is fit for the kingdom of God

Jesus was... and still is very clear
When people asked, ***what do you want me to do Lord?***

Jesus answered...
Follow me... right now... and don't look back.
Follow me... right now... and don't look back.

You heard what they said
I will follow you...
But first I need to go bury my father
or
I will follow you...
But first I need to say good-bye to my family
or
I will follow you, but first I need to...
Anything other than actually following you... right now...
It's one thing to say ***I'm all in***, another to actually do it.

How do *we* finish that phrase?

Why is it... when people get ready to follow Jesus...

They always have to do something else... *before* they can start.

Ever taken care of a child at bedtime? Then you know...

I'm thirsty

I'm not tired yet

I need to go to the bathroom

I need to brush my teeth again

Can you read me that book again

There are monsters!

It's too dark

I want my night light plugged in over here

I'm too cold

I'm hungry

I got to get something

The door is not opened/closed enough

Can you sing me another song?

It makes me wonder... if *maybe*... just *maybe*...

We're being a little childish in responding to Jesus' call... *Follow Me*

I mean I know, deep in our hearts, we know that that God is God
Creator of everything... seen and unseen... all of it

And that we are his children... That's our *real* identity...

We say... *Of course we will follow him.*

But when the time comes to actually *do it*

We have *so much* to *do*... *before* we start?

Barbara Brown Taylor talked about a pastor
 Someone in his church lost a job,
 He called on them, offered sympathy and prayer.
 Just as expected...

But what if that pastor found out
 a different member of the congregation got a big promotion...
 with significantly more pay.

What if the pastor called them and said,
*I heard the news
 and was wondering if I might come by to pray with you about this.
 I'm concerned about temptations the new position may throw your way
 as well as how it might hinder your ability to serve here at our church.*

*I'd like to pray for God's strength for you
 in the face of your new success.*

We do cordon off parts of our lives
 from the total claims Jesus makes on us.
 We act as though we are our own after all...
*Why would the church have anything to say to us
 as long as life chugs along smoothly?*
 We are far more willing to follow Jesus in desperate times...

In order to follow Jesus
 We need to kill off old ways of defining value
 And that all begins by admitting... that without God,
 We're lost in sin's wilderness and unable to find our own way out.
 Once we own *that*,
 we are wide open to Jesus' call,
Follow me.

Still... when we actually move in God's direction
 It's hard not to look back
 Really hard...

We remember *the good old days...*
 But if we carefully scrutinize those bygone days...
 We'll see *lots* of problems... *lots* of shortcomings

When we look back,
Time washes away the tough stuff, and leaves the highlights gleaming.

That's why it is so hard *not* to look back
 That's why Jesus requires such a clean break from our past
 That's why he *demands*
Don't look back!

That phrase... *Don't look back*
 Permeated our culture for generations

Abraham Lincoln said
I walk slowly, but I never walk backward

Jesus said *Follow Me! Don't go back!*

How about...
*Our eyes are in the front of our head
 because it's more important to look forward than backward*

Another old adage...
Don't look back. You'll trip and fall over what's right in front of you.

And that's also true of following Jesus
 When we stray, when we stumble along the path of Jesus
 It almost *always* because we look away from God
 That's when we're *most tempted*
 When look back... back to our old lives.

Think about it

*If Cinderella had looked back and picked up her shoe,
 she never would have met prince charming.*

When we don't follow Jesus
 And we try to run our lives all on our own
 We don't give God much of an opportunity to take care of us

When we insist on living just for ourselves
 We don't leave room for God
 Following Jesus is not about us getting *bigger*
 It's about us getting *smaller*
 So that there plenty of room for a really big God in our lives.

If we are *not* being blessed... as we follow God...
 Maybe it's because we keep turning back...

Satchel Page said

Don't look back... something might be gaining on you

If we don't keep an eye on the rearview mirror
 something will come from behind and run over us.
 Is that why we look back? Because we're afraid?
 We just can't accept that God really does have our back?
 When Jesus says *follow me...* He has our back... and our sides...

James Thurber wrote
*Let us not look back in anger,
nor forward in fear,
but around in awareness!*

We need to remain vigilant
Aware of the distractions that surround us
But willing to turn our faces towards Jesus
And follow him

140 years ago, John Sammis wrote this hymn

When we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word,
What a glory He sheds on our way!
While we do His good will, He abides with us still,
And with all who will trust and obey.

Trust and obey, for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

Not a shadow can rise, not a cloud in the skies,
But His smile quickly drives it away;
Not a doubt or a fear, not a sigh or a tear,
Can abide while we trust and obey.

Trust and obey, for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.