

# Into Samaria

It was the first day of the trip from Galilee to Jerusalem. They had been walking most of the day and were nearing a Samaritan village. Jesus had sent two of the disciples on ahead to see about food and lodging for the night. It was going to be nice to rest.

At the top of a rise in the road ahead Jesus saw a Samaritan youth bend down to pick up a rock. Taunting him, the young man hefted the rock, pretending that he might throw it at Jesus and his disciples. When they came closer he moved to the side of the road and glared as Jesus and his disciples passed by.

Travel through Samaria offered a shorter route to Jerusalem but there was a price to pay in this hostile place. The Samaritans were a people of mixed Gentile and Jewish ancestry. They practiced magic and were believed therefore to be demon-possessed and diabolical. Yet they also worshiped the God of Israel, claiming to be descendants of Jacob whose water well at the foot of Mt. Gerizim was a holy site for the Samaritan people.

The mainstream Jews had chosen Jerusalem as the holy city, the city of David. Pilgrims making their way to Jerusalem for the Passover celebration were often heckled.

The messengers were hurrying back to meet Jesus and the others on the road.

“These Samaritans won’t let us enter their village,” one of them snarled in anger. When he looked down the road behind them, the messenger noticed the youth who was still threatening the disciples with a rock. “Some of those up at the village have rocks too,” he said.

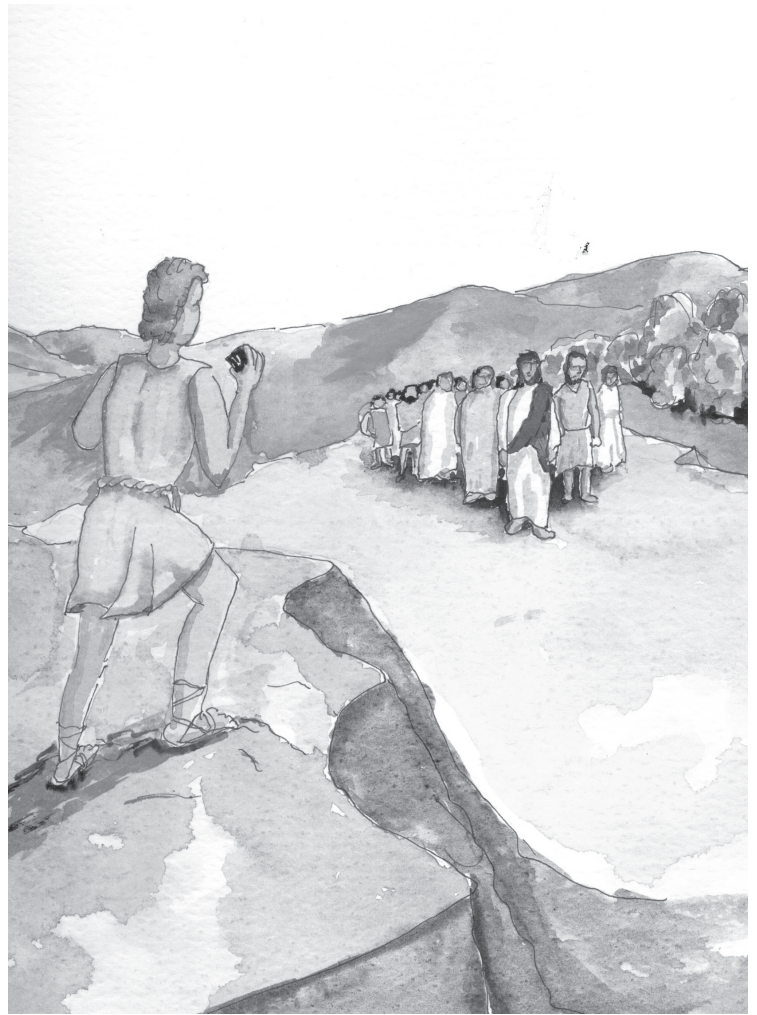
“Then we will stay on the main road and further on we’ll find another place to stop,” Jesus announced.

“Do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?” James and John asked.

“No, we will leave them alone.” Jesus ordered.

As they continued south, one of the group declared that he would follow Jesus wherever he went. The sun was setting and the prospect of sleeping by the road that night prompted Jesus to say “The foxes have lairs, the birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.”

As they continued, Jesus was walking next to a young man, a newcomer who had been curious about these travelers. Jesus invited him to really follow him.



“Let me bury my father first,” he replied. In Jewish custom after a year the eldest son was responsible for reburying the dry bones of his father in a special box in a slot in the tomb wall. Yet Jesus demanded a violation of this commandment to honor father and mother.

“Let the dead bury their dead. Come away and proclaim the Kingdom of God,” Jesus challenged.

When another who was invited to follow said he first wanted to say goodbye to his family, Jesus answered him “Whoever puts his hand to the plow but keeps looking back is unfit for the reign of God.”



Jesus makes strict demands on those who would follow him. He teaches non-violence. He teaches us to love our enemies. He places the kingdom and the reign of God above any earthly matters. He invites us to follow him into hostile lands, without food or water or a place to stay, without excuses, without looking back.