Sermon: **“If anyone wants to come with me, he must forget self, carry his cross and follow me”** (Mark 8.34)

Do we want to go with Jesus? This is no invitation to tick the boxes of articles of belief; this is no offer to get the theology of the trinity straight once-for-all; this is no request to solve the human and divine natures of Christ. But it is a deal to go on a journey, a voyage of discovery, an expedition to see the sights of heaven.

Of course, we want to go! But it is not so easy. Let me tell you some stories.

[1] **Uncertainty** A church with an earthquake damaged building is split between those who want to start again and those who want to restore. Being unable to agree they do nothing. TEXT.

[2] **Out of the Comfort Zone** OurLent Course looks into the community, and imagines the community looking in at us. What do we see? We see folk doing odd things – majorettes, dog trainers, sports. What do they see? They see people sitting and standing at odd points, peculiar language spoken, rituals with bread and wine.

To go from one to the other involves going out of one’s comfort zone – it is easier to stay put. TEXT.

[3] **Weariness** Young at Heart: Film about old people in a choir (average age is 81 with the oldest being 92). Some died during filming. The others had to deal with these losses. "The show must on," but it's not easy. Before they began how many would have said they were too old, too tired, past it? Might we not think the same? TEXT.

[4] **Pride** Why did religious leaders kill Jesus?
Not because they thought he was Messiah, but cos they knew he was not.

Not because they were in league with the Devil, but because they were certain they were on God’s side.

Not because they could not hear God, but because they were sure the voice they heard was not from God.

How easily does pride prevent us from responding to the Spirit? TEXT

[5] **Fear** Journey’s End: Lt Hibbert, terrified of death, delayed going into trench; he ‘needed’ water.

How often have you used the urgent to get out of doing the important?

We, fearing our community, could easily dwell on little things to prevent us from facing our calling. TEXT

[6] **Resolution** Though God’s way is hard, and is a continuous call, going God’s way is so good. It is why I am a minister, and so glad to be journeying with God; I can imagine nothing better, nothing more satisfying, nothing that makes better sense of life. Will you follow Jesus? TEXT.

Uncertainty

When you lead us and we’re doubtful,

For the pathway is unclear,

Shall we stop and go no further?

 Dare we follow Jesus?

Out of the Comfort Zone

When the call is to discomfort -

People, places that are strange,

Shall we head for home together?

 Dare we follow Jesus?

Weariness

When we’re tired, might long declining,
Carrying cross - beyond our powers,

Shall we leave God’s work to others?

 Dare we follow Jesus?

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Pride

When we’re certain we know better,

Sure the call we hear is false,

Shall we turn from Spirit’s prompting?

 Dare we follow Jesus?

Fear

When we know too well God’s challenge,

Frightened of the price to pay,

Shall we busy selves in trivia?

 Dare we follow Jesus?

Resolution

Though we know your way’s not easy,

And it is a lifelong plea,

It alone makes sense of living.

 We will follow Jesus.