

Luke 9:60

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.

Analysis

Let the dead bury their dead (Ἄφες τοὺς νεκροὺς θάψαι τοὺς ἔαυτῶν νεκρούς, Aphes tous nekrous thapsai tous heautōn nekrous)—this shocking statement uses 'dead' in two senses. Let the spiritually dead (those without eternal life) bury the physically dead. Those who lack resurrection life can handle death's logistics; those whom Christ calls to kingdom proclamation must prioritize the urgent mission. Jesus isn't commanding callousness but demanding radical priority: the dead can tend the dead, but the living must preach life.

But go thou and preach the kingdom of God (σὺ δὲ ἀπελθὼν διάγγελλε τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ, sy de apelthōn diangelle tēn basileian tou theou)—the you is emphatic: 'but you, in contrast to the spiritually dead.' The verb diangellō means to proclaim thoroughly, publish widely. The man is called to herald the kingdom's arrival—the most urgent message in history. No earthly duty, however sacred, outranks this commission. Jesus teaches that authentic discipleship recognizes the gospel's urgency and the kingdom's absolute claim, relativizing even family obligations.

Historical Context

Jesus's statement would have scandalized His audience. Burial of parents was a Torah duty that even excused priests from holiness requirements (Leviticus 21:2-3). Yet Jesus claims authority to override this, revealing that kingdom allegiance transcends Mosaic law. This principle resurfaces in Jesus's teaching that

hating father and mother is required for discipleship (Luke 14:26)—hyperbolic language meaning that loyalty to Christ must relativize all earthly relationships, even the most sacred.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What does Jesus's distinction between the spiritually dead and the living reveal about the two humanities—those in Adam and those in Christ—and how this fundamental division reorders all other loyalties?
2. How does Christ's command to prioritize kingdom proclamation over family obligations challenge modern evangelicalism's domestication of discipleship into family values religion rather than radical kingdom mission?

Interlinear Text

εἶπεν	δὲ	αὐτῷ	ό	Ἰησοῦς,	Ἄφες	τοὺς	νεκρούς	θάψαι
said	but	unto him		Jesus	Let			bury
G2036	G1161	G846		G2424	G863			G2290

τοὺς	έαυτῶν	νεκρούς	σὺ	δὲ	ἀπελθῶν	διάγγελλε	τὴν
G3588			thou	but		and preach	
	their	dead	G4771	G1161			G3588

βασιλείαν	τοῦ	θεοῦ
the kingdom	G3588	of God
G932		G2316

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 3:1 (References God): And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

1 Timothy 5:6 (Parallel theme): But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.

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