





ASH WEDNESDAY

everything [in] between intention & action



Toward Jerusalem

by Lauren Wright Pittman

Inspired by Luke 9:51-62

Digital painting

The relationship between the Jews and Samaritans at the time of Jesus' ministry was defined by centuries of political upheaval resulting in foundational cultural and religious differences. Instead of centering Jerusalem as their religious and cultural hub, Samaritans built their temple on Mount Gerizim.¹ I think that Jesus' unwavering focus on Jerusalem was a non-starter for the Samaritans. Perhaps feeling disrespected or even judged, the Samaritans were unable to receive Jesus. Their intention to remain faithful to their religious traditions made it difficult for them to embrace Jesus' message.

When James and John saw the Samaritans reject Jesus, they were enraged. It is certainly not difficult for me to imagine being triggered by people with different worldviews, as I find myself similarly dealing with lots of anger that is difficult to process. In their fury, James and John seek to call down a consuming fire from heaven upon the Samaritans, an action antithetical to their intention as disciples to follow the way of Jesus.

Jesus is central to this image, urgent in his stride, with his eyes set on Jerusalem at the horizon line. His clothing is patterned with doves and olive branches as he faces the city of peace. Behind him, James points accusingly at the Samaritans while John tugs on Jesus' garment. Their clothing holds patterns of fire raining down from heaven. In front of Jesus, a group of Samaritans are altogether unreceptive. Their clothing is patterned with Samaritan distinctions like mountains representing Mount Gerizim, and scrolls, stone tablets, and shapes in sets of five to reference the Pentateuch as their holy scripture.²

What might trigger you toward unproductive rage or to resist the work God is doing in the world? How can we be resolute in our calling, like Jesus, despite distractions and adversity? What would it look like to align your actions with your intentions?

—Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

¹ For historical context on and discussion of the Samaritans (Strong's G454), please visit: blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g4541/esv/mgnt/0-1/

² Ibid.