

The Gospel According to Luke
April 28, 2019
Reading: Luke 9:1-9

Sermon #37
Luke 9:1-9

Messengers of Christ

Sent Out ...

Our passage of scripture this morning is a critical point in Jesus' ministry. It marks a transition at about half way through his 3-year earthly ministry. Up to this point Jesus alone performed miracles, preached the gospel, taught, handled conflict and dealt with the religious leadership. Since Jesus alone was the preacher and teacher his followers and the crowds traveled where he went and the crowds were growing, making it ever more difficult to accommodate everyone. Jesus' time in Galilee was drawing to a close as we read later in chapter 9, **"When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem."** (Luke 9:51) It would have been difficult to travel to Judea and Jerusalem with such large crowds.

The disciples had been in an 18-month intensive internship preparing them to carry on the work of Jesus and his gospel once he ascended to heaven. The disciples now move from hearers and learners to preachers and messengers of the gospel of Christ. Jesus specially gives them his authority, for remember, they were not filled with the Holy Spirit until the Day of Pentecost and the Holy Spirit then brought to their minds everything Jesus had taught them. Jesus told his disciples, **"These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. ²⁶ But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."** (John 14:25-26) So, Jesus gives his authority for this mission and preaching and evangelism trip.

Luke is concerned with giving an overview and the big picture with evidence for one to know who Jesus is and believe. Luke leaves off in chapter 8 with healing the woman with the issue of blood and raising Jairus' daughter back to life. Mark chapter 6 tells us between these events and sending out the 12, Jesus made a final trip back to his hometown of Nazareth where again he was rejected. For a more complete picture of this event one needs to also read Matthew 10 and Mark 6.

Looking back through the scriptures we can see there were phases to Jesus' ministry for his disciples. The 1st phase was when he called them to saving faith as recorded in Luke 5 and John 1. This is what happens to all believers and is what happened to you. The 2nd phase was when they entered into permanent full-time discipleship. This is also the case with every true believer. You are a permanent, life-long student of the Bible and the gospel. The 3rd was their transition from disciples to apostles. They had the authority to teach and plant Jesus' church. The 4th was their transition from learners to teachers and preachers with Jesus' authority as we see in this morning's passage. This is true of believers as well, as we mature and learn the scriptures, we will always be students but we also become teachers of Christ' gospel. The goal is for you to teach the gospel to others. The final and 5th phase was when Jesus sent them into the world with what we call the Great Commission recorded in Matthew 28:19-20. Likewise, the Great Commission is Jesus' command for all believers – **“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”** Like the apostles we are to make disciples, baptize and teach all that Jesus commands in the Scriptures.

Jesus taught and prepared the apostles so that they became the foundation of his church, as Paul wrote, “the household of God,²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.²² In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.” (Ephesians 2:19-22) The teachings and writings of the apostles are authoritative beginning with the early church to this day, and the church “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” (Acts 2:42) There are no new authoritative writings; the scriptures are closed and nothing is to be added and as a church we are to continue as the apostles taught.

Some might ask why 12? It appears Jesus chose 12 ordinary men because they were symbolic of the 12 tribes. The importance of this number was reinforced by Matthias replacing Judas. They were chosen from the non-religious establishment because Israel’s religious leadership had become apostate. From Jesus’ commissioning instructions for the 12 to go out and teach and preach the kingdom of God develops an overview of what it means to be a messenger of Christ and the objectives hold true to this day.

... to Proclaim

Open your Bible to Luke chapter 9, Jesus “called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases.” The disciples were not always together and not always with Jesus. They may have gone back to their homes for short periods of time or taken care of personal needs. So, it appears, Jesus calls the 12 together to prepare them for their mission. We will return to verse 1 in a moment.

The mission for the 12 had a single purpose, Jesus “sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.” Their single purpose was proclaiming the kingdom of God through the gospel of Christ. The healings validated their authority to do so. They preached the same message Jesus had been preaching. Go back to the beginning of chapter 8, Jesus gave the disciples the example, “he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him.” (v.1) This was their mission also, to emulate Jesus and his teaching about the kingdom of God. This is our mission; this is your mission as a child of God and follower of Jesus.

Israel was always meant to be a people and nation to shine God’s light out into the fallen and dark world. However, because they had become of nation steeped in a religion of works and laws and they used religion to control others and to gain power; they had become man-centered and works based and God would set them aside and Jesus’ church would become the instrument to take the gospel to every people group and every nation. Revelation chapter 7 speaks of the remnant of Israel again being a witness of God. But, until then, we have a choice, you and me, do we go through the motions, do we become hard and legalistic like Israel, do we use Jesus’ salvation to elevate ourselves above others or do we live and preach the gospel of Christ with love, grace and mercy? What say you? Joshua said, “Now therefore fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. ... choose this day whom you will serve ... as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” (Joshua 24:14-15) Just like the disciples and like Judas, my beloved you must chose whom you serve.

... in Power

Back to verse 1, Jesus “called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, ² and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.” The 12 were given power that only Jesus had possessed. When Jesus began his ministry his ability to perform supernatural miracles and have controlling power over demons and life and death validated who he was and that he possessed the authority of God the Father. Now, this same power is given to the 12 for the very same reason. Since the completion of the New Testament preachers and teachers and evangelist’s message is validated by the scriptures which have been validated as true by history and evidence. The Bible is the only eternal truth that will never change. The need for miracles waned after the church was established. If one takes into account the history of the Apostles and the early church and more specifically the book of Acts, they will notice miracles were fading away as the church was established and the Apostles were martyred. Even Paul the Apostle appointed by Jesus performed miracles, healing and demonstrated power over the supernatural early in his ministry, but these acts diminished as his ministry matured. For example, if we go to 2 Timothy chapter 4 will find, Paul writes, “I left Trophimus (trof·ee·mos), who was ill, at Miletus” (2 Timothy 4:20) and Paul does not miraculously heal him. When Timothy was sick with a reoccurring stomach ailment Paul advised him to treat it with wine. I am not saying miracles no longer take place, but the need is less because of the completion of the Bible. Working in countries where there was no church or Bible in the people’s language, we saw people come to Christ through miracles and visions, but as the church was established and the Bible became available in their language the miracles and visions diminished. Their purpose was to validate the proclaiming of the kingdom of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

When one observes the ministry of Christ and his apostles there is not only a focus on proclaiming the kingdom of God, but they do so with love and grace and mercy without diminishing the truth of the Word of God and man's fallen state of sin. We read in the letters of the New Testament that soon false teachers infiltrated the church and demonstrated their true purpose, as had the religious leaders of Israel, of seeking power for themselves by manipulating people's fears. Nothing has changed those who proclaim the gospel of Christ with love and compassion for others while holding true to the Word of God have servant hearts and have no interest in personal power and glory. The false prophets, false teachers of today behave just as they did almost 2000 years ago. My beloved test all teachers and preachers by the Word of God and observe their motives and heart. It is not about us but the glory of God the Father through Jesus Christ, God the Son. Jesus called his disciples together as they were in conflict about their position in the coming kingdom and said, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them.⁴³ But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant;⁴⁴ and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all.⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Mark 10:42-45) Jesus saved us and as his followers we live to bring him glory and to serve others.

... without Encumbrances

Jesus instructed but they had to trust him and believe. Reading at verse 3, Jesus instructs the disciples, "Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not have two tunics.⁴ And whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart." The disciples were being given divine power to alleviate suffering but unlike Jesus who was sinless these men were redeemed

sinner and there would be the temptation to use this power for personal gain. Jesus wants them to learn to trust God to provide for their needs. In Matthew's account of the sending out the 12 Jesus instructs them to **“Heal *the* sick, raise *the* dead, cleanse *the* lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give.”** (Matthew 10:8) We are not to keep God's gifts, but give them freely to others. It is not about power and position, but it is about serving. So Jesus tells them to take nothing with them. There is also the rabbinic rule that one must not enter the temple precincts with staff, shoes and money-bag. The symbolic reasons underlying this command would, in both cases, be probably the same; to avoid even the appearance of being engaged on other business, when the whole being should be absorbed in the service of the Lord. The disciples and by principle we are to take the blessings of God and not hoard them but given them freely to those in need and we certainly are not to use them for personal gain. This power given by Jesus was for this mission trip and meant to authenticate the gospel they were to preach. Go forth with nothing but the clothes on their back was to teach them to trust God. Joyce and I have experienced this – where we were stripped of the material things of this world and we had to rely on God and this grew our faith and trust.

This is not however, the rule for all ministry or for all Christians to always follow. God gives times of plenty and times of little as we need to learn. Jesus speaks of this mission trip to his disciples in the upper room saying, ³⁵ **“When I sent you out without money belt and bag and sandals, you did not lack anything, did you?”** They said, **‘No, nothing.’** ³⁶ **And He said to them, ‘But now, whoever has a money belt is to take it along, likewise also a bag, and whoever has no sword is to sell his coat and buy one.’”** (Luke 22:35-36) One must seek God's will for his assignment of ministry and God will lead one in how they are to do the ministry his has called them to – make no mistake every Christian, every person in this

room is called to do ministry – it is a matter of to whom and where. What is the norm in ministry is it is about being a servant of the servant King and it is all for his glory and not for ours.

Jesus continues in verse 4, “**And whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart.**” In the time of Jesus there were not hotels as we know them today. Travelers stayed in people’s homes. It was considered a privilege to bring someone into your home and show hospitality. The inns in towns were more like bars or brothels with rooms and was not proper for those of God. Staying in a family’s home for the duration of their time in a town also separated them from the false teachers who moved from house to house and place to place always collecting money. Recently the Cathedral of Notre Dame was badly burned. It is a historical site and one of human beauty. But we need to remember it was built on the backs of the poor by the Catholic Church selling indulgences to take away people’s sins. God’s beauty is in the souls of his children and we need to care for people – let me ask for us to ponder, is it right in the name of God to spend a billion dollars to rebuild Notre Dame when the needs of the poor are so great around the world? Paul wrote to the Philippians, ¹¹ “**Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. ¹² I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. ¹³ I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.**” (Philippians 4:11-13) As the disciples learned, we too, need to be content with what the Lord provides in both plenty and want and to be humble servants.

... with Discernment

Jesus ends his instruct in verse 5, “And wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them.” This would symbolize those of God and those who reject God and his messengers whether is because of the legalism of the apostate Jewish religion or because they desire the world over God. There was also the rabbinic idea that the dust of Gentile lands carried defilement and strict Jews are said to have removed it from their shoes whenever they returned to Palestine from abroad. The disciples’ shaking of the dust from their feet was a strong testimony against those who rejected the gospel. It declared symbolically that Israelites who rejected the kingdom were no better than the Gentiles. Even worst in Matthew’s account, Jesus tells his disciples “if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town.”¹⁵ Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town.” (Matthew 10:14-15) Jesus is explaining the seriousness of people rejecting the gospel of salvation. Paul wrote to the church in Corinth stating, “If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed.” (1 Corinthians 16:22) To be accursed means to be cast away from God, to be damned to hell and suffer eternal punishment. We are to reach out to those who are lost and need Christ, but if they reject the gospel, we need to separate ourselves to keep spiritual corruption away from us. It is the Holy Spirit in conjunction with the Word of God that gives one spiritual discernment to evangelize the world and remain apart from the world.

The 12 disciples set out to fulfill their assignment, reading at verse 6, “And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.”⁷ Now Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was happening, and he

was perplexed, because it was said by some that John had been raised from the dead,⁸ by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the prophets of old had risen.⁹ Herod said, ‘John I beheaded, but who is this about whom I hear such things?’ And he sought to see him.” We do not know the details of their mission trip other than they went preaching the gospel and healing. It appears the general reaction of the villages is that of Herod – he was perplexed, and so too the people knew that ordinary men could not do the miracles of healing and raising people from the dead, but they rejected their message of the gospel. It was deeply troubling to Herod that some were claiming that John the Baptist had risen from the dead for the ghost or a risen prophet was a large threat to Herod. Some wondered if Elijah had come or another prophet from the earlier history of Israel. This is seen more clearly in Matthew chapter 16, “Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, *he Jesus* asked his disciples, ‘Who do people say that the Son of Man is?’¹⁴ And they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’” (Matthew 16:13-14) Herod feared God’s judgment for his executing God’s innocent prophet John the Baptist. In Mark’s account it reads, “when Herod heard of it, he said, ‘John, whom I beheaded, has been raised.’” (Mark 6:16) Herod did not fear enough to repent, but continued in his unbelief and evil ways. Herod’s fear led to his wondering “who is this about whom I hear such things?” Herod wanted to see Jesus not to verify he was the Messiah, but to make sure he was not John. Herod wanted anyone but John or Jesus the Messiah or a prophet of old. Today, as then, most people do not know the right answer when asked who Jesus is. The remnant does, those God calls know; Peter knew the answer when Jesus asked, “‘But who do you say that I am?’¹⁶ Simon Peter replied, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’” (Matthew 16:15-16) The centurion at the cross knew, “when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way *he Jesus* breathed his last, he said, ‘Truly this man was

the Son of God!” (Mark 15:39) Do you know? Do not answer too quickly. I am asking do you know who is the God of the Bible? But do you know God and have a relationship with the true God? Many religions have redefined God and if one believes in a God other than God the Creator of everything as found in the Bible only, then they worship a false God and a false Christ and no matter how sincere their belief, they are as Paul said, **“let him be accursed”** meaning separated from God for eternity and damned to hell.

The principles Jesus taught to prepare the 12 to go and preach the gospel is true for all believers. Jesus sends all believers among the lost to share the gospel of salvation. We are to proclaim the Word of God and the gospel as Jesus taught, as the disciples learned from him and as they taught without change. Jesus may not have given us supernatural power over demons and to heal the sick and raise the dead, but our lives and our proclamation of the gospel manifests Jesus authority given to us, as his followers and we have been given his authority and the Word of God has authority. Jesus asks us to trust him based on proven truth and this is also what we proclaim. We are to learn to be content in all circumstances and trust Jesus and show the world his peace. As the disciples learned, we also are to learn by studying the scriptures, praying for spiritual wisdom to give us spiritual discernment; knowing when to preach and disciple people in the gospel of Christ, and when to shake the dust from our sandals and separate ourselves from unbelievers and leave them to be accused by God. My beloved live as the disciples lived, the early church lived – let us **“devote ourselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers”** (Acts 2:42) bringing Christ’s light into the dark world. Amen!