

Sunday, September 3, 2023 | Everyday Disciple

Week 19 | Luke 9:1-9 | "Kingdom Expansion"

A couple weeks ago, we explored the topic of testing. No one likes to be tested in class or life, but it plays a vital role in our development. For instance, spiritually speaking, God uses trials to help us evaluate ourselves to show us what's on the inside. With that knowledge, we can think soberly with our eyes open to reality. Not only that, the testing we experience also helps us grow our faith. In fact, as we saw in the stories involving the hemorrhaging woman and Jairus' daughter, the testing of our **faith** demonstrates that, with Jesus, the **impossible** is made **possible**. Even death and disease cannot hold captive those who put their faith in the Son of God.

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The Good Shepherd looks to make under-shepherds of his sheep. He wants to invite willing participants into the field to share in the harvest of gospel ministry. And, considering who the apostles were, we can safely assume that the smart, talented, and worthy need not apply for the work of the ministry. It seems abundantly clear that it is God's good pleasure not to call the qualified but to qualify the called (cf. 1 Cor. 2:1-5).

I want you to notice three things:

i. **Jesus commissioned the Apostles for the work of the ministry (vs. 1-2).**

**READ:** Luke 9:1-2 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> And he called the twelve together and gave them **power** and **authority** over all demons and to cure diseases, <sup>2</sup> and he sent them out **to proclaim** the kingdom of God and **to heal**.

There are **two** observations worth your consideration:

**First**, God's agents were sent with a message of **peace**, not war. God's kingdom was here, but it would not take over through conflict but comfort. Unlike in our world, where invading countries use bloodshed, the Lord's first official envoys came helping, not harming. He did not send them out preaching bad news but good news. They were

ambassadors of peace, not war. As followers of Jesus, we must meet our hearers' physical needs before we have any hope of getting them to be listeners.

**Second**, Jesus empowered his disciples to do the same things he did. And while this is remarkable, there are some scriptural parallels to Jesus' actions: Moses/Joshua and Elijah/Elisha. Both mentees performed similar miracles to their respective mentors. However, there are two critical differences between Jesus and his disciples and the OT parallels: First, unlike Moses and Elijah, Jesus was still alive when he did this. Second, Jesus is the source of the apostle's power and authority. But who is Jesus to bestow such power on his followers? He is God. While yet alive, this transference of divine gifts is proof of Jesus' divinity. In fact, a better parallel to what Jesus does here is how God used Moses to perform the various miracles during the Exodus (i.e., water to blood, parting of the Red Sea, water from a rock, etc.).

ii. **Jesus coached the Apostles about how to do the ministry (vs. 3-5).**

**READ:** Luke 9:3-5 (ESV)

<sup>3</sup>And he said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not have two tunics. <sup>4</sup>And whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. <sup>5</sup>And wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them."

Before we unpack this passage, it is worth mentioning these instructions appear to be only for a specific season and directed to one particular group. While there are timeless principles for us to learn, we ought to be cautious about applying these specific prohibitions to our modern-day context. After all, later in Luke 22:35-38, the Lord recalls this scene but reverses his initial command and instructs the disciples to be as prepared as possible.<sup>1</sup>

Again, **two** observations are worth your consideration:

**First**, while we could get into the specifics of how Jesus instructed them not to take a staff, bag, bread, money, or an extra change of clothes, the point is that they were to walk by faith. They were to trust in God's provision for their journey, not their own. If what Jesus said was true that "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Mat. 4:4), then his disciples must learn this truth for themselves firsthand. They will need to know that God does not need their help. He is

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<sup>1</sup> Morris, Leon, *Luke*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentary, (Downers Grove, IL; InterVarsity Press, 1988), p. 183.

fully capable of taking care of his followers without any assistance. And, above, followers of God must learn to trust in God to provide.

**Secondly**, Jesus emphasizes **community** over quality of life. As was apparent by what they were told not to bring, their journey would not be financially profitable. In fact, rather than look for the best lodgings, they were instructed to stay in the first house that welcomed them in, regardless of how luxurious it was. Moreover, they would not be permitted to bounce from place to place, looking for better accommodations. Whatever house first welcomed them was where they would stay until they left. In this way, Jesus' ministry would not be characterized by profit and privilege, as so many others were at this time, but community. The Kingdom of God is, at its heart, a community bringing together the rich and poor alike for the sake of the gospel.

This is why they were instructed to "shake off the dust from your feet as testimony against" those who would not receive their message. Not welcoming God's ambassadors is rejecting God's presence in one's community. To be unwelcoming to God's followers is to close one's door in the face of God himself. This practice was even more remarkable when considering that the Apostles were sent to Jews during this mission. That they would shake the dust from their feet in front of the Jewish neighbors would've been shocking, to say the least. Jesus wanted the unbelieving Jews to know they were not a part of his kingdom community.

### iii. **Jesus' credibility spread because of the apostle's ministry (vs. 6-9).**

**READ:** Luke 9:6-9 (ESV)

<sup>6</sup>And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing **everywhere**.

<sup>7</sup>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, <sup>8</sup>by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the prophets of old had risen. <sup>9</sup>Herod said, "John I beheaded, but **who** is this about whom I hear such things?" And he sought to see **him**.

Herod heard all that was happening and did not desire to see the disciples. Luke tells us the regional king "sought to see [Jesus]." Later, we'll learn that he will get his wish (cf. Lu. 23:6-16). But it will become clear that the ruler is no honest inquirer; he does not wish to learn the truths of God's Kingdom. Far from it, all Herod wants is a **show**. Perhaps, had he wanted to hear Jesus' message rather than experience a spectacle, he might've been persuaded to become a

believer.<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, many wanted to be around Jesus for the wrong reasons (cf. Jn. 2:23-25; 6:26).

Funny enough, up until this point, Herod had never heard of Jesus. After all, he thinks he might be John the Baptist raised from the dead (cf. Mar. 6:14; Mat. 14:1-2). Had he known of Jesus before, he doubtless wouldn't have thought such a thing. It wasn't until *after* the apostles' adventures in Herod's territory are we told that the local ruler finally took note of Jesus. This ought not only to encourage us but also warn us. Be encouraged that, should you be on a mission for Jesus, the gospel will spread, but in doing so, there will be opposition. While there will be miracles, there will also be conflict. The Book of Acts proves this. Jesus' mission will be met with acceptance and rejection, good and bad, blessing and cursing. The ministry, at times, can be equal parts joy and heartache.

### **So, what's the takeaway?**

The Lord works through flawed vessels to expand his kingdom.

I do not know why the Lord, in his grace, invites imperfect people into his perfect work, but he does. Doubtless, the God of Creation can do whatever he wants. He does not need anyone or anything. Yet, time and again, we see him inviting deeply flawed human beings to join Him (i.e., Noah, Abraham, David, Peter, Paul, etc.).

### **READ: 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup>And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. <sup>2</sup>For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. <sup>3</sup>And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, <sup>4</sup>and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, <sup>5</sup>so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

What happens when faithful but flawed men and women share the flawless message of the gospel? The Kingdom of God expands; it grows exponentially. Its message is so potent and powerful that even the most untalented and ungifted orator would find success if they but preach the good news.

### **READ: 2 Corinthians 4:7-10 (ESV)**

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<sup>2</sup> Edwards, James R., *The Gospel According to Luke*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Eerdmans Publishing, 2015), p. 264.

<sup>7</sup> But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. <sup>8</sup> We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; <sup>9</sup> persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; <sup>10</sup> always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.

God's strength is not demonstrated by our strength but through our weaknesses.

## Video Description

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Pastor’s manuscript can be found here: