

## Sunday, October 22, 2023 | The Road to Redemption

### Week 1 | Luke 9:51-56 | “The Age of Grace”

Last week, we unpacked two of the six hindrances to discipleship: *pride* and *prejudice*. Just as faithlessness keeps us from helping those in need (cf. Lu. 9:40), selfishness and tribalism keep us from accomplishing great things for God. When we think only about our greatness and/or the superiority of “our camp,” we weigh ourselves down, needlessly making an already difficult task even harder. The Lord would not have his followers garner rivalries; he would have them join hands with *anyone* who uses truth to fight the dark. Thus, Christianity is best served when Christians do not compete with one another but work together for the glory of Christ alone. Consideration for others and collaboration with others are the hallmarks of great disciples.

---

Today, we’ll start a new subseries in our study of Luke’s account called “The Road to Redemption.” In Luke 9:51, the good doctor will tell us that Jesus sets “his face to go to Jerusalem,” and what he meant by that is that the Lord was headed to his final hour. This visit to Jerusalem eventually culminates at “the place that is called The Skull” (Lu. 23:33). And although a lot happens between here and there, Calvary was always the last destination on this trip. The Messiah came to redeem mankind, but that redemption came at an incredibly high cost. Jesus was born to die (Lu. 2:35).

However, the cross was still a ways off, and, as we’ll see throughout this series, Jesus will make the best of the miles he has left. While on this road to redemption, he will teach his disciples (and, by extension, us) what it means to truly take up a “cross daily and follow [him]” (Lu. 9:23). After all, if the Lord expected his followers to show the world real love (cf. Jn. 15:13), he had to first demonstrate what that kind of love looked like.

To be clear, even though we’re starting a new series, it is still connected to what’s preceded it. The various subseries in Luke—i.e., *Go Tell It On The Mountain*, *Onward*, *Everyday Disciple*, and now, *The Road to Redemption*— have been designed to help break up this account into more manageable pieces. As Desmond Tutu famously said, “There’s only one way to eat an elephant: a bite at a time.” But, make no mistake, they cannot stand on their own. Each series *must* be understood within the larger framework of this gospel. Hence, as I said a couple weeks ago, the end of chapter 9 covers six hindrances to our discipleship. So far, we’ve covered faithlessness (Lu. 9:37-45), pride, and prejudice (Lu. 9:46-50), and now we’ll unpack the fourth: vengefulness.

Many promising up-and-coming disciples have been led astray by the vice of vengefulness. And this can happen for several reasons. For some, believers might lash out because they, or someone they love, have gotten hurt. After all, the saying, 'hurt people hurt people,' rings true for a reason. Or, as we'll see in today's passage, believers tend to become vindictive whenever God is dishonored or humiliated. Depending on the severity of the offense, followers of the Prince of Peace might even demand that swift, decisive, and often violent action be taken. **But this is not the Christian way.** And historically, whenever Jesus-followers start taking up arms, it has *always* gone poorly. Make no mistake: those who've been given grace are **forbidden** from getting even.

I want you to notice **two** things:

**i. Jesus was dead set on redemption (vs. 51-53).**

**READ:** Luke 9:51-53 (ESV)

<sup>51</sup> When the days drew **near** for him to be taken up, he **set** his face to go to **Jerusalem**. <sup>52</sup> And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered **a village** of the **Samaritans**, to make preparations for him. <sup>53</sup> But the people did not receive him, because his face was **set** toward **Jerusalem**.

The phrase "to be taken up" refers to **Jesus' ascension** after his death, burial, and resurrection.<sup>1</sup> Though the phrase is likely indicative of the whole event. Also, this is a call back to **Luke 9:31**, when the Lord spoke with Moses and Elijah about his "departure."

When Luke said that Jesus "set his face," he meant that the Lord was *determined*.<sup>2</sup> Jerusalem was his final destination, and only death awaited him once he got there. If we had been Jesus, we would've likely procrastinated if we would've gone at all. But Jesus wasn't a procrastinator or a coward. He knew *where* he was going and *when* he would get there. The Lord moved towards Jerusalem at a steady but unrelenting pace. Admittedly, **though we will not actually enter the city's gates until Luke 19:45—10 chapters or 413 verses later—Zion will always be on the horizon.** Even when the Lord seems to meander, backtrack, or roam, he moves ever closer to his final hour.

Sending messengers had to be protocol at this point. Jesus had grown so popular that there needed to be some organization. But that isn't really the surprising bit. **It would've blown a first-century Jew away when they read that Jesus went to Samaria.** Why? Because the Jews

---

<sup>1</sup> Morris, p. 400; Edwards, p. 294.

<sup>2</sup> Edwards, p. 297.

and the Samaritans had been sworn enemies for nearly **two hundred years**. And during that time, they had done much to provoke each other. For instance, even though they were, ethnically, **half-Jews**, the Samaritans were known to **kill Jewish pilgrims** while they made their way to Jerusalem. At one point in their shared history, the Jews invaded Samaria and **destroyed their temple**. Thus, it is not an exaggeration to say that **Jesus** going to **Samaria** *willingly* was like **George Washington** going on vacation with **Benedict Arnold**, a **Jew** having dinner with a **Nazi**, or a **Ravens** fan rooting for the **Steelers**. The Samaritans were prejudiced.

And while a first-century Jew would've been *shocked* by Jesus' willingness to go to Samaria, **they wouldn't have been surprised by how the Lord was received**. In fact, as we'll see with James and John, it likely would've **reinforced their prejudice** against the Samaritans. **Like going to NYC**, you should expect to be treated poorly when you're in Samaria.

But Luke tells us that it wasn't because Jesus was a Jew that they refused to open their doors; it was "because his face was set toward Jerusalem." The implication is that, had Jesus made Samaria his primary destination, the Samaritans would've likely welcomed him with open arms. They were a territorial bunch (cf. Jn. 4:20).

How do Jesus' actions apply to us? Even if we know we won't be received favorably, we should go wherever God leads. Jesus cared very little for social etiquette. He didn't allow popular opinion to govern his actions. He loved the Samaritans even though his countrymen hated them. And though the Lord knew how he would be received (he was God, after all), he went anyway. Though Jesus knew the Samaritans would refuse him, he tried to go anyway. The Son of God forces himself on no one, but he comes to all, even those he knows won't accept him. **This should tell us that whatever barriers we've placed in our lives that keep us from reaching for our enemies should be broken down**. As Jesus was dead set on redemption, so should we be primarily concerned with our gospel witness rather than holding on to a grudge.

**ii. James and John were dead-set on retribution (vs. 54-56).**

**READ:** Luke 9:54-56 (ESV)

<sup>54</sup> And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them, [as Elijah did]?" <sup>55</sup> But he turned and **rebuked** them [and he said, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of; <sup>56</sup> for the Son of Man came not to destroy people's lives but to save them."] And they went on to **another** village.

Now, before we unpack James' and John's mistakes, I have to point out that their suggestion to wipe Samaria off the face of the planet is not that unreasonable **for three reasons**:

1. Elijah had burned up some dishonorable Samaritans almost 600 years before; why not do it again?<sup>3</sup> In 2 Kings 10, we read about how the prophet, because of the Samaritan's disrespect, called down fire on not one but **two** 50-man-companies. In fact, it would've been three burned-up envoys if not for the fact that the captain of the third group was more respectful. Hence, the disciples might even argue that calling down fire was biblical. It happened once in a similar scenario. Why not again?
2. Palestine was (and still is) a culture deeply engrained in an honor/shame dynamic.<sup>4</sup> Not to mention that hospitality was of the utmost importance. So, for an entire village to snub their noses at Jesus, a guest in their lands who was also a highly respected Rabbi, was a matter of great offense. **Imagine if someone came and slapped someone you love in the face. How would you react?**
3. Consider all the things James and John heard Jesus say and see him do. They had confessed him to the 'Christ of God,' and already, they were starting to understand that Jesus was more than just the Messiah. After all, the Transfiguration went a long way to demonstrate that Jesus was more important than both Moses and Elijah and through the testimony of God Himself, they learned that he was the very Son of God (Lu. 9:35). **Knowing who Jesus is, would you have acted any different in the moment if you had been James and John?**

So, from a certain perspective, James' and John's vengeful request makes sense. And, to their credit, their request did illustrate their zeal for Jesus. And while it doesn't count for much, they did ask for *permission* first. Nevertheless, James and John made **three critical mistakes**:

1. **They misinterpreted Jesus' mission.** John 3:16-18 states, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God." Jesus would not accomplish his goal

---

<sup>3</sup> Bock, p. 970.

<sup>4</sup> Garland, p. 412.

through force but through sacrifice.<sup>5</sup> James' and John's request is one of the best examples that prove the disciples did not understand the nature of Jesus' messiahship.<sup>6</sup>

2. They **misunderstood** their place in Jesus' mission. Romans 12:19 states, "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." Followers of Christ are not judge, jury, and executionary. That is God's prerogative. Instead, James and John should have understood they were peacemakers, not warmongers (cf. Matt. 5:9; Lu. 6:35).
3. They **misjudged** Samaria's place in Jesus' mission. Acts 8:4-8 states, "Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there. When the crowds heard Philip and saw the signs he performed, they all paid close attention to what he said. For with shrieks, impure spirits came out of many, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. So there was great joy in that city."

Though James' and John's feelings may have been valid, in light of who Jesus was, who they were in God's plan, and where the Sarmatians eventually ended up, it is clear that the disciple's suggestion was brash, ill-considered, and, ultimately, ungodly (e.g., Jonah). Peter said, "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9).

How can you tell if you're being just or vengeful? When you see your nemesis fall, what do you feel? Sadness or happiness? If you enjoy seeing your enemy finally get what's coming to them, rest assured, you wanted *revenge*, not *justice*. Not even God takes pleasure in the demise of the wicked (cf. Ezek. 33:11).

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

Jesus' disciples seek **reconciliation, not retribution**. Those who've been given grace are *forbidden* from getting even. We ought to be a gracious people, not a vengeful horde. We turn the other cheek, not bring down the hammer. We extend an olive branch, not take aim.

To be clear, when we are called to forgive, Jesus is not minimizing our hurt. Some have been so deeply wounded by others that the damage runs deep and has long-lasting effects. Such pain is

---

<sup>5</sup> Edwards, p. 298.

<sup>6</sup> Garland, p. 414.

real and ought not to be minimized. After all, God cared about your hurt so much that it took his Son dying for God to even begin to forgive.

Jesus is calling us to compare the hurt we experienced with the injury he experienced when his Son died on the cross for our sins. If there was ever a person undeserving of death, it was Jesus. And yet, still, he died. And not just any death, but the brutal and humiliating death of a cross. Why? Because of our sin.

So, no, do not discount your hurt. Instead, compare it to how your sin hurt God's Son and how, even while you were yet sinners, Christ died for *you*. In doing so, you will seek reconciliation, not retribution.

## Video Description

### **The Road to Redemption | Week 1 | “The Age of Grace” (Luke 9:51-56)**

SPEAKER: Ben Hyrne, Pastor

Today, we'll start a new subseries in our study of Luke's account called "The Road to Redemption." In Luke 9:51, the good doctor will tell us that Jesus sets "his face to go to Jerusalem," and what he meant by that is that the Lord was headed to his final hour. However, the cross was still a ways off, and, as we'll see throughout this series, Jesus will make the best of the miles he has left. While on this road to redemption, he will teach his disciples (and, by extension, us) what it means to truly take up a "cross daily and follow [him]" (Lu. 9:23).

To be clear, even though we've started a new series, it is still connected to what's proceeded it. Hence, as I said a couple weeks ago, the end of chapter 9 covers six hindrances to our discipleship. So far, we've covered faithlessness (Lu. 9:37-45), pride, and prejudice (Lu. 9:46-50), and now we'll unpack how *vengefulness* can keep us from maturing in our discipleship.

Many promising up-and-coming disciples have been led astray by the vice of vengefulness. As we'll see in today's passage, believers become vindictive whenever God is dishonored or humiliated. Depending on the severity of the offense, followers of the Prince of *Peace* might even demand that swift, decisive, and often violent action be taken. But this is not the Christian way. And, historically, whenever Jesus-followers start taking up arms, it has *always* gone poorly. Make no mistake: those who've been given grace are forbidden from getting even. We are to seek reconciliation, not retribution.

**Pastor's manuscript can be found here:**

---

#### **Grace Pointe Baptist Church**

12029 Eastern Ave.

Baltimore, MD 21220

Contact: [info@GracePointeLife.com](mailto:info@GracePointeLife.com)

Website: <https://www.gracepointelife.com>

Give here: <https://www.gracepointelife.com/give/>

Podcast Details:

Season 38 | 1