

CONCERNING THE WAY

March 6, 2012

LESSON 130: THE GOSPEL OF LUKE



Chapter 9

Luke 9:1-6 Jesus called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases. (2) Then he sent them to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. (3) He told them, "Don't take anything along on the trip—no walking stick, traveling bag, bread, money, or even an extra shirt. (4) When you go into a home, stay there and leave from there. (5) If people don't welcome you, when you leave that city, shake its dust off your feet as a testimony against them." (6) So they left and went from village to village, spreading the good news and healing diseases everywhere.

- Jesus gave the Twelve disciples two tasks on this “missionary journey. They were to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. They were able to carry out that mission because Jesus gave them power (dynamis, “spiritual ability”; cf. 4:14, 36; 5:17; 6:19; 8:46) and authority (exousia, “the right to exercise the power”) over the demonic realm and the physical realm of diseases. Jesus had just shown His power over both of these realms (8:26-56). Like Jesus had shown, their healing ministry was to authenticate their preaching ministry. William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, was once blamed for offering food and meals to poor people instead of the simple gospel. He said right back, "It is impossible to comfort men's hearts with the love of God when their feet are perishing with cold."
- The fact that the Twelve healed in Jesus’ authority and power showed that He was the Messiah who could bring in the kingdom. So, believing the Twelve was to believe that the Messiah had come. People would show they had believed in the Twelve—and so in the Messiah—by showing hospitality to them. Luke said that the Twelve went... everywhere, which was probably everywhere in the Galilean region rather than everywhere in Israel.
- In those days there was only one way of spreading a message around a large area and that was by word of mouth. Newspapers did not exist; books had to be hand-written, and books the size of Luke and Acts would have cost a fortune to produce! That is why Jesus sent out the Twelve on this mission. He had to deal with the technology of the time and the limitations of His human body; his helpers had to be mouths to speak for him.
- They were to travel light. That was because the person who travelled light could go far and fast. If they were welcomed they would be fed and housed, if not, they were to shake off the dust from their feet when they left the town. When Rabbis entered Palestine after some journey in a gentile land, they shook off the last speck of heathen dust from their feet. A village or town which would not receive them was to be treated as a strict Jew would treat a heathen country. It had refused its opportunity and had condemned itself.

Luke 9:7-9 Now Herod the tetrarch heard about everything that was happening. He was puzzled because it was said by some that John had been raised from the dead, (8) by others that Elijah had appeared, and by still others that one of the ancient prophets had

come back to life. (9) Herod said, "I beheaded John. But who is this man I'm hearing so much about?" So Herod kept trying to see Jesus.

- The missionary journey must have been very effective, judging from Herod's reaction. Things were happening. Some thought Elijah, the forerunner, had at last come again. Maybe even someone like Isaiah, Jeremiah, or the prophet promised in Deuteronomy 18:15 had arrived. But probably because of a guilty conscience, there was a lingering fear in Herod's mind that John the Baptist, who he thought he had gotten rid of, had come back to haunt him.

Luke 9:10-11 The apostles came back and told Jesus everything they had done. Then he took them away with him privately to a city called Bethsaida. (11) But the crowds found out about this and followed him. He welcomed them and began to speak to them about the kingdom of God and to heal those who needed healing.

- The Twelve had come back from their tour, and Jesus needed some alone time with them to debrief them on what they had experienced. Bethsaida was a village on the far side of the Jordan to the north of the Sea of Galilee. But people discovered where he had gone and followed him in hordes--and he welcomed them. Jesus had compassion on them.

Luke 9:12-17 As the day was drawing to a close, the twelve came to him and said, "Send the crowd away to the neighboring villages and farms so they can rest and get some food, for we are here in a deserted place." (13) But he said to them, "You give them something to eat." They replied, "We have nothing more than five loaves of bread and two fish--unless we go and buy food for all these people." (14) Now there were about 5,000 men. So he said to his disciples, "Have them sit down in groups of about fifty." (15) They did this and got all of them seated. (16) Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and blessed them. Then he broke the loaves in pieces and kept giving them to the disciples to pass on to the crowd. (17) All of them ate and were filled. When they collected the leftover pieces, there were twelve baskets.

- This is the only miracle of Jesus told in all four gospels (compare Matthew 14:13; Mark 6:30; John 6:1).
- Before Jesus distributed the food he blessed it; he said grace. There was a Jewish saying that "he who enjoys anything without thanksgiving is as though he robbed God." The blessing said in every home in Palestine before every meal was like this, "Blessed are you, Jehovah, our God, King of the world, who causes bread to come forth from the earth." Jesus would not eat without giving thanks to the Father, the giver of good gifts.
- Jesus was concerned about people's physical needs. He did miracles like this to prove He was the prophesied Messiah, and to show us that God cares about our needs (Philippians 4:19).
- Jesus' help was generous. There was enough, and more than enough. God is like that. When He blesses us it is always more than enough.
- The people who had gathered there were apparently not local people because the disciples wanted Jesus to send the crowd away so that they could find food and lodging. This would not have been necessary if the people had lived nearby and could have returned to their homes.
- When Jesus told His disciples to give the people something to eat, He was showing His men that it was

humanly impossible to feed the crowd. The 5,000 men is a round figure, not counting the women and children who were there (Matthew 14:21). The total number might have been over 10,000.

Luke 9:18-22 One day while Jesus was praying privately and the disciples were with him, he asked them, **"Who do the crowds say I am?"** (19) They answered, **"Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, and still others one of the ancient prophets who has come back to life."** (20) He asked them, **"But who do you say I am?"** Peter answered, **"The Christ of God."** (21) He strictly ordered and commanded them not to tell this to anyone. (22) He said, **"The Son of Man must suffer a great deal and be rejected by the elders, the high priests, and the scribes. Then he must be killed, but on the third day he will be raised."**

- This is one of the most crucial moments in the life of Jesus. He asked this question when he was already turning his face to go to Jerusalem, where He knew that he was going to a cross to die. He wanted to know before he went, if there was anyone who had really been paying attention and realized who He was. The right answer would make all the difference. If they hadn't figured it out, all his work would have gone for nothing. If there was any realization, even if it was incomplete, it meant that he had lit a fire in the hearts of men that time would never put out. When Jesus heard Peter's declaration, He knew He had not failed. Read Matthew 16:13-20 for more details.
- Not only did the Twelve have to discover who Jesus was, they had also to discover what that meant. They had grown up with the idea that the Messiah would be a conquering king who would lead them to world dominion. Peter's eyes probably blazed with excitement when he said this. But Jesus had to teach them that God's anointed one had come to die upon a cross. He had to take their ideas of God and of God's purposes and turn them upside down; and from this time that is what He set Himself to do.
- Jesus began by asking what men were saying about him; and then, suddenly, he asked the Twelve, "Who do you say that I am?" It is never enough to know what other people have said about Jesus. A person might be able to pass any test on what has been said and thought about Jesus; he might have read every book about Christology written in every language on earth and still not be a Christian. Jesus must always be our own personal discovery. To every person Jesus comes asking, not, "Can you tell me what others have said and written about me?" but, "Who do you say that I am?" Paul did not say, "I know what I have believed"; he said, "I know whom I have believed" (2Timothy 1:12). Christianity does not mean reciting a creed; it means knowing a person.
- Jesus said, "I must suffer." It is interesting to look at the times in Luke's gospel when Jesus said must. "I must be in my Father's house," (Luke 2:49). "I must preach the kingdom," (Luke 4:43). "I must go on my way today and tomorrow," (Luke 13:33). Over and over again he told his disciples he must go to the cross (Luke 9:22; 17:25; 24:7). Jesus knew he had a destiny to fulfill. The Father's will was His will. He had no other purpose but to do on earth what God had sent him to do. Like our Lord Jesus, we are under orders. We are bought with a price; we must align our wills with God's.
- For the first time in Luke Jesus teaches His disciples about His ultimate mission—the fact that He had to die. Also for the first time, He tells them He will be resurrected. Why did Jesus tell them not to tell anyone about who He was?

Luke 9:23-27 Then he said to all of them, **"If anyone wants to come with me, he must**

deny himself, pick up his cross every day, and follow me continually. (24) For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. (25) What profit will a person have if he gains the whole world, but destroys himself or is lost? (26) If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and the holy angels. (27) Truly I tell you, some people who are standing here will not experience death until they see the kingdom of God."

- Here Jesus tells them the conditions of the disciples truly following Him. This certainly sounds harsh in some ways to us, but some teachers try to apply what Jesus said directly to us today.
 - First of all, we must take everything Jesus said in its historical context. The subject of these verses is Jesus' death on the cross. He was telling His disciples, the Twelve, that if you're going to follow me, this is what you have to face. Like much of what Jesus said to His disciples, it is not specifically to us but has an application to us as well. Let's discuss:
 - "Deny himself". What does that mean? It is to treat the self as if it did not exist. Usually we treat ourselves as if our self was far and away the most important thing in the world.
 - "Take up his cross" To take up our cross means to be prepared to face that kind of suffering for loyalty to Jesus; it means to be ready to endure the worst that man can do to us to be true to him. Most of the disciples died for their loyalty to Christ. Would we be willing to do the same?
 - He must spend his life, not hoard it. The whole extent of the world's standards must be changed. The questions are not, "How much can I get?" but, "How much can I give?" Not, "What is the safe thing to do?" but, "What is the right thing to do?" Not, "What is the least I can do?" but, "What is the most possible?" The Christian must realize that he is given life, not to keep for himself but to spend for others.
 - If one is ashamed of Him (will not identify with Him or believe on Him) and His words (His message), Christ will be ashamed of him in the future. It was critical that the people of that generation side with Jesus and His disciples in order to escape future judgment. So it is today.
 - In the last verse of this passage Jesus says that some standing there will see the kingdom of God before they die. There are many views on what Jesus meant by this, because it is obvious that the physical kingdom didn't come in the disciple's lifetimes. The best explanation is usually found by looking near the difficult verse. In the next few verses Luke tells us about an event that would seem to be what Jesus was speaking about, and even tells us exactly how much later it happened. The transfiguration (vs. 28-31) was a foretaste of the glories of the kingdom. This seems the best view on what Jesus meant.

Luke 9:28-31 Now about eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John, and James with him and went up on a mountain to pray. (29) While he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes turned dazzling white. (30) Suddenly, two men were talking with him. They were Moses and Elijah. (31) They appeared in glory and were discussing Jesus' departure which he was about to bring to fulfillment in Jerusalem.

- Here we have another of the great events in Jesus' life upon earth. This could have been a glimpse of the kingdom Jesus mentioned in verse 27 that Peter, John, and James would experience. Moses and Elijah appeared and spoke with Jesus. The bodies of Moses and Elijah were never found. God buried Moses' body (Deuteronomy 34:5-6), and Elijah did not die but was taken up to heaven (2 Kings 2:11-12, 15-18). These two men represent the beginning and the end of Israel - Moses, as the Lawgiver, founded the nation, and Elijah is to come back before the great and terrible day of the Lord (Malachi 4:5-6).
- Moses and Elijah spoke about His departure (exodon, "going out or away") which He was about to bring about at Jerusalem. "Departure" referred to Jesus' leaving the world through which He would bring salvation—like Yahweh had brought deliverance to Israel in its Exodus (departure) from Egypt. From this point on, Jesus said several times that He was headed toward Jerusalem (Luke 9:51, 53; 13:33; 17:11; 18:31).
- What happened on the Mount of Transfiguration we can never know exactly, but we do know that something tremendous did happen. Jesus had gone there to seek the approval of God for the crucial step he was about to take. There Moses and Elijah appeared to him. Moses was the great law-giver of the people of Israel; Elijah was the greatest of the prophets. And this gave those three disciples just a little glimpse of what the kingdom was like. What can we learn about the kingdom of heaven from this?
- Jesus could set out to Jerusalem now, knowing that at least one little group of men knew who he was, and confident that God approved of the step that he was taking.

Luke 9: 32-33 Now Peter and the men with him had been overcome by sleep. When they woke up, they saw Jesus' glory and the two men standing with him. (33) Just as Moses and Elijah were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it's good that we're here! Let's set up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." (Peter didn't know what he was saying.)

- As the disciples woke up, they were overwhelmed with the wonder of the situation. They realized they were in a kingdom setting which triggered Peter's idea that they build three shelters. Peter may have been thinking of the Feast of Booths, a Jewish holiday which had long been associated with the coming kingdom (see Zechariah 14:16-21). Peter seemed to have assumed that the kingdom had arrived! Luke puts in an editor's note that Peter did not know what he was saying. It wasn't that Peter misunderstood the significance of the kingdom setting—he was right about that. The problem was that he forgot Jesus' prediction that He would suffer (Luke 9:23-24) and take up his own cross.
- Can you see a lesson for us in verse 32? We should pray, "Lord, keep me always awake to you."

Luke 9: 34-36 But while he was saying this, a cloud appeared and overshadowed them, and they were frightened as they went into the cloud. (35) Then a voice came out of the cloud and said, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen. Keep listening to him!" (36) After the voice had spoken, Jesus was alone. The disciples kept silent and at that time told no one about what they had seen.

- A cloud was often a symbol of God's divine presence (Exodus 13:21-22; 40:38). Maybe the disciples thought Jesus was being taken away from them, and they would never see Him again. Like at Jesus'

baptism (Luke 3:22), here a voice spoke to those that were there. Being familiar with the Old Testament, as the disciples were, they had to recognize the reference (in the words "listen to Him") in Deuteronomy 18:15 with its messianic prediction of a Prophet greater than Moses. The people were to listen to (obey) the Prophet.

- The disciples may not have spoken about what had happened on the mountain then, but later they wrote about it – read John 1:14 and 2 Peter 1:16-18.

Luke 9:37-42 The next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a large crowd met Jesus. (38) Suddenly a man in the crowd shouted, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. (39) Without warning a spirit takes control of him, and he suddenly screams, goes into convulsions, and foams at the mouth. The spirit mauls him and refuses to leave him. (40) I begged your disciples to drive it out, but they couldn't." (41) Jesus answered, "You unbelieving and perverted generation! How much longer must I be with you and put up with you? Bring your son here!" (42) Even while the boy was coming, the demon knocked him to the ground and threw him into convulsions. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the boy, and gave him back to his father.

- No sooner had Jesus come down from the mountain top than the demands of His ministry came right back. A man had evidently come to the disciples seeking their help. The Greek word used in Luke 9:42 is very violent. As he was coming to Jesus, the demon threw him down. It is the word used of a boxer giving a knock-out blow to his opponent or of a wrestler throwing someone. But the disciples were helpless to cure him. But when Jesus came he dealt with the situation quickly and calmly.
 - The night spent on the mountain was absolutely necessary, but it could not last longer. Peter, not really knowing what he was saying, would have liked to stay longer on the mountain top. He wanted to build three tents so that they might stay there in all that kingdom glory; but they had to come down again. In our own lives there are moments that we would like to last indefinitely. But after the time on the mountain top we have to come back to the battle and the routine of life; that special time is meant to give us strength for everyday life.
 - The whole impression of the scene here is that of people running about not knowing what to do. The disciples were helplessly baffled; the boy's father was disappointed and upset. Into this chaos came Jesus. He immediately saw the situation and brought calm and healing. Often we feel that life is out of control; that we have lost our grip on things. Only the Master of life can deal with life to bring everything under control, and that's why we look to Him.
 - Jesus did appear to show some frustration here. What was that about?

Luke 9:43-45 So all the people continued to be amazed at the greatness of God. Indeed, everyone was astonished at all the things Jesus was doing. So he said to his disciples, (44) "Listen carefully to these words. The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into human hands." (45) But they didn't know what this meant. Indeed, the meaning was hidden from them so that they didn't understand it; and they were afraid to ask him about this statement.

- Jesus had told the disciples (verse 22) that He was going to be killed, but now He talks about being

betrayed, and the disciples just don't get it. Why do you think the meaning was "hidden from them"?

Luke 9:46-48 Now an argument started among them as to which of them might be the greatest. (47) But Jesus, knowing their inner thoughts, took a little child and had him stand beside him. (48) Then he said to them, **"Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. For the one who is least among all of you is the one who is greatest."**

- The disciples now understood that Jesus was the Messiah who would bring in the kingdom. That might be what started this argument about their greatness. Jesus set an important principle here, that the one who is the greatest is the one who is least among you. This, of course, models the same attitude of Jesus' life of service, the Messiah who was willing to go to the cross for all people.
- This argument could have also been about the fact that Jesus took only Peter, James, and John up to the mountain with Him. Those three probably felt privileged, and the others may have been jealous. Jesus came down from that mountain thinking about the cross, but the disciples were only thinking about the positions of honor they would have in the kingdom they thought Jesus was about to bring in.
- Jesus was saying, "If you are prepared to spend your lives serving, helping, loving people who, in the eyes of the world, do not matter at all, you are serving me and serving God. If you are prepared to spend your life doing these apparently unimportant things and never trying to be what the world calls great, you will be great in the eyes of God."

Luke 9:49-50 John said, "Master, we saw someone driving out demons in your name. We tried to stop him, because he wasn't a follower like us." (50) Jesus said to him, **"Don't stop him! For whoever is not against you is for you."**

- The disciples thought that they had exclusive rights to doing powerful works in Jesus' name. But there may have been others who weren't following Jesus everywhere He went, but had faith in the Messiah strong enough to drive out demons.
- Sometimes when a person is sincerely trying to honor God but doing it more out of ignorant zeal than full understanding, the Lord recognizes that he is really for Him, and will reward that person. In fact, Christ will somehow see to it that his sincerity will be rewarded with greater understanding (see Hebrews 11:6; John 7:17).

Luke 9:51-56 When the days grew closer for Jesus to be taken up to heaven, he was determined to continue his journey to Jerusalem. (52) So he sent messengers on ahead of him. On their way they went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him. (53) But the people didn't welcome him, because he was determined to go to Jerusalem. (54) When his disciples James and John saw this, they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them, as Elijah did? (55) But he turned and rebuked them, (56) and they went on to another village.

- This looks like we're getting close to the crucifixion of Jesus here, but this section, Jesus' journey to Jerusalem, takes up the next ten chapters. This next lengthy section of Luke is primarily about two things: (1) the rejection of Jesus by most on His journey toward Jerusalem (9:51-11:54) and (2) Jesus teaching His followers because of that rejection (12:1-19:27). The previous section (4:4-9:50) dealt with

Jesus' authentication as Messiah in His Galilean ministry. In this next section authentication was no longer the issue. The issue was now acceptance. Jesus was not accepted by most of the nation. So He began to teach His followers how they should live under that opposition.

- Jesus made several trips to Jerusalem, but Luke put them together to make his point that Jesus had to get to Jerusalem to present Himself as the Messiah and then leave the earth.
- The direct way from Galilee to Jerusalem led through Samaria; but most Jews avoided it. There was a centuries' old quarrel between the Jews and the Samaritans (John 4:9). The Samaritans in fact did everything they could to stop and even to injure any travelers who attempted to pass through their territory. For Jesus to take that way to Jerusalem was unusual; and to try to find hospitality in a Samaritan village was even more unusual.
- When he did this he was extending a hand of friendship to a people who were enemies. In this case not only was hospitality refused "because He was going to Jerusalem". I'm sure James and John believed they were doing a good thing when they offered to call on God to wipe out the village. They were thinking, I'm sure, of Elijah (2 Kings 1:9-12), who destroyed by fire those who were opposing God's work. It looks like they were assuming they had the same authority to do such things as Elijah! Jesus, though, called for tolerance. It would have been right to wipe them out, the Samaritans who rejected Jesus would be judged for their rejection of the Messiah. But Jesus had more important things to do.

Luke 9:57-62 While they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." (58) Jesus told him, "Foxes have holes and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to rest." (59) He told another man, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." (60) But he told him, "Let the dead bury their own dead. But you go and proclaim the kingdom of God." (61) Still another man said, "I will follow you, Lord, but first let me say goodbye to those at home." (62) Jesus told him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

- Here we have the words of Jesus to three would-be followers. To the first man, his advice was, "Before you follow me, count the cost." He would have to give up what most think are the necessities of life.
- Jesus' words to the second man are probably not as harsh as they sound. Most likely the man's father was not dead yet, and not even nearly dead. This is an expression, used even today in the Middle East. He probably meant, "I will follow you after my father has died." Jesus' point in this historical context is that proclaiming the kingdom of God was much more important than anything else.
- Jesus' words to the third man just strengthen the point of the last one - His message of the kingdom of God was more important than anything else—even family members. The message and the Messiah cannot wait. The reference to the plow is that you didn't look back while you were plowing because that would make the furrow crooked.
- Luke doesn't tell us what any of these three men decided to do. But Jesus left the choice up to them.