

Jesus founded his Church on prayer, discipleship, and a holistic gospel ministry rooted in him—these are the foundation of spiritual blessing for individuals, communities, and the world; therefore we will only find blessing for ourselves and others as we pray, become disciples, and minister as this “New Israel.”

Introduction – [Story of wanting to be great.] To what do you look for happiness? What would make you feel blessed?

I. The Power of Jesus

A. Fueled by prayer (v. 12)

According to the gospels, Jesus always spent the night in prayer with God before an important decision or event in his life (cf. Lk 22:39-46). In this passage, Jesus knew he would be choosing the 12 men from his band of followers (disciples) to be specially commissioned as his apostles. This was a vitally important decision because the apostles would carry Jesus’ mission forward after he ascended to heaven. Luke records Jesus praying at every major point in his life: baptism (3:21), choosing the apostles (6:12), Peter’s confession of faith (9:18-20), the transfiguration (9:28-29), teaching the Lord’s Prayer (11:1-4), before Peter’s de-confession (22:32, 40, 46). What is the lesson for us? As Jesus prayed, his disciples also ought to live a life of prayer.

B. Used for ministry (vv. 17-19)

1. These summary-statement verses set the scene for Jesus’ Sermon on the Plain. They demonstrate Jesus’ power and compassion to people as he was preparing to teach them that “ministry” is essentially Christian discipleship. His ministry modeled for disciples that their job was to share the love, power, and compassion of Jesus to the whole world. Care for the needy and preaching the gospel were the two great acts that dominated Jesus’ time. Both were important to him, and he neglected neither.
2. The whole multitude—“all the crowd”—sought Jesus in order to touch him because the Holy Spirit power came out of him that healed them all. The only thing people needed was to reach out and touch him. Jesus didn’t even need to act for people to be healed! Merely allowing himself to be touched was enough. But notice that Jesus is not passively compassionate. His care for the needy is tailored to the individual’s specific need.

II. Attracted the People of Jesus

A. Disciples (vv. 13, 17-19)

Disciples are chosen to be learners, even followers, in the school of Christ. More than pupil-teacher is implied in the disciple-master relationship. A close personal fellowship is necessary. The band of disciples comprised those who regularly followed Jesus wherever he went, and were committed to his teaching. Moreover, a disciple is committed to becoming like his teacher (Lk 6:40).

B. Apostles (vv. 13-16)

1. Apostles are literally “sent ones”—ambassadors sent with the authority of the sender (Lk 9:1-2; Acts 1:1-8; cf. 2 Cor 5:19-20). Jesus chose from his disciples 12 men to have this special role in the New Israel (notice the allusion to the 12 tribes of Israel; cf. Lk 22:28-30). The Jews of Jesus’ day comprised an incomplete subset of the original 12 tribes of Israel. Only the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and half of Levi remained. Thus the restoration of all 12 tribes of Israel would only occur in the messianic age (Ezek 37:15-28). When Jesus named 12 men as apostles, this

symbolic action “restored” Israel, making God’s people whole again. The New Israel is a continuation, in a new form, of the kingdom of God that spans the ages from creation to the new creation (cf. Mt 21:43; 1 Pet 2:9; Rev 21:12, 14).

2. Lists of the 12 disciples/apostles are also found in Mt 10:2-4; Mk 3:16-19; Acts 1:13. Peter is always listed first, and Judas Iscariot is always last. They are usually called “the disciples” or “the Twelve” in the gospels, and “the apostles” in Acts. At the time Jesus appointed them apostles they were just ordinary men. What is the lesson? God calls ordinary people—the nobodies of this world—to build his Church (1 Cor 1:26-29). Why? So that God alone receives the glory for the work of his Church.

3. While ordinary in themselves, Jesus made them into something great! The Lord’s apostles were directly or indirectly responsible for most (if not all) of the NT books. (Only the authorship of Hebrews remains uncertain, but the early Church recognized it as authoritative, apostolic, and God-inspired.)

4. But the greatness of the apostles is not the point. It is Jesus’ greatness that is magnified. He took 12 ordinary men, with all their sin, faults, and quirks, who were very different (even opposite!) ideologically, temperamentally, and educationally and made them into one unified family. Jesus is glorified in his power to draw men, in his wisdom in choosing men, and in his love in pouring his life into these men.

III. To Live for Jesus

A. The Life of Discipleship (vv. 18-19)

The people came to Jesus for three reasons: to hear him teach, to be healed of their diseases, and for exorcism of demons. Compared to the abbreviated parallel account in Mark, Luke emphasized that the crowd had come to hear Jesus teach (Mark 3:8 says the crowd came to hear about what Jesus did). This orients us to prepare our hearts to hear Jesus’ teaching on discipleship. The Sermon on the Plain is an important message for disciples. Listen up and heed the Master! This encourages disciples to major on Jesus’ teaching and minor on healing (Mt 6:33).

B. The Life of Blessing (vv. 20-49)

The Sermon on the Plain is a lesson on discipleship in the school of Jesus. Jesus will teach in the Beatitudes that following him is a life of blessing, but following the way of the world is a cursed life. But these blessings and curses do not work out in this life the way you would expect. To live a life of blessing, a disciple must love sacrificially—even loving your enemy! The cost of discipleship is steep. A life of blessing rests on the foundation of discipleship lived at Jesus’ feet and alongside other disciples.

Conclusion – Jesus came to seek and save the lost. Some of the first people Jesus sought became disciples and shortly thereafter apostles. Within this larger story Jesus is calling, miraculously healing, and forgiving sin. Luke is showing us that Jesus is the Christ: Savior, Lord, and God. Who else has the power to heal, forgive sin, or demand discipleship? Do you want to escape the selfishness trap, of seeking happiness at the expense of others? Then follow Jesus. Discipleship in the school of Christ is the way out of selfishness and into a life of blessing. Unless you believe in him, trust in him, pray to him, listen to him, obey him, serve him, respond to his call on your life to be a disciple, then you will always choose personal happiness over being a part of something bigger than you. And ironically, you will end up unhappy. Only disciples, relying the power of the Holy Spirit to follow Jesus, will find personal blessing and also find their part in the biggest thing of all—the people of God in the kingdom of God—the New Israel.