

To Seek and To Save the Lost

Jesus Sends Out the Twelve Apostles

Luke 9:1-9

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Scripture

Jesus was about thirty years old when he began his public ministry (Luke 3:23), which was primarily a ministry of preaching and healing. Jesus' ministry lasted approximately three years before his death by crucifixion (which I believe took place on April 6, 30 AD). The first half of Jesus' ministry took place in Galilee. As his ministry in Galilee was coming to a close, he sent his twelve apostles on a short-term missions trip.

Let's read about Jesus sending out the twelve apostles in Luke 9:1-9:

¹And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, ²and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. ³And he said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not have two tunics. ⁴And whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. ⁵And wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them." ⁶And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.

⁷Now 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, ⁸by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the prophets of old had risen. ⁹Herod said, "John I beheaded, but who is this about whom I hear such things?" And he sought to see him. (Luke 9:1-9)

Introduction

Learning comes by doing.

Most people know how to ride a bicycle. Actually, riding a bicycle for most adults is fairly easy. But do you remember what it took to learn to ride a bicycle?

Toddlers may begin on those big, fat plastic three-wheelers on which they sit and push themselves forward with their feet on the floor.

Then they move up to a metal tricycle with pedals. After a short while they get the hang of peddling and they enjoy hours of peddling around the yard.

After a year or two they get a small bicycle that has training wheels. Riding the bicycle with training wheels is not too difficult for them.

Eventually the day arrives when the training wheels come off. It is a big day! Mom or Dad walk next to the child who may be somewhat unsteady on the bicycle. But they hold on and let go for short periods of time so that the child gets the feel of riding a bicycle without training wheels. Finally, Mom and Dad know that the child is able to ride alone and they let go. And off goes the child! Oh, there may still be a few falls. But it is not long and the child is riding quite proficiently all around the neighborhood. The child has learned to ride a bicycle!

Learning comes by doing.

Early in his ministry in Galilee Jesus chose twelve disciples to become his apostles (Luke 6:12-16). These twelve apostles were trained by Jesus to carry on his mission after his death, resurrection and ascension into heaven.

The twelve apostles had been Jesus' special disciples for about eighteen months. They had listened to his preaching. They had seen his healing. They had witnessed him casting demons out of people. In addition, Jesus tutored them constantly as they followed him day after day and night after night.

Finally, Jesus decided that it was time, as it were, to take off the training wheels. The twelve apostles had seen enough and it was time for them to begin the practical part of their in-

ternship. They needed to go and put into practice what they had seen and heard, because learning comes by doing.

Lesson

The account of Jesus sending the twelve apostles on a short-term missions trip in Luke 9:1-9 will teach us principles for ministry today.

Let's use the following outline:

1. Their Empowerment (9:1)
2. Their Mission (9:2)
3. Their Instructions (9:3-5)
4. Their Obedience (9:6)
5. Their Effect (9:7-9)

I. Their Empowerment (9:1)

First, let's look at their empowerment.

The twelve apostles had been with Jesus for about eighteen months. He had been ministering by himself. And so he decided to send them out to minister in his name. It seems that this was in part to give the apostles experience in ministry (the training wheels were coming off!), and in part to multiply the ministry of Jesus himself. Luke said in verse 1 that Jesus **called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases.**

Luke said that Jesus gave **power and authority to the twelve.** One commentator said, "**authority** (*exousia*) is the *right* to do something, while **power** (*dunamis*) is the *ability* to do it."¹ What is the distinction between the two?

Suppose you lived in a neighborhood that had a violent gang. One night you walked out to the mailbox. Suddenly, the

¹ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke: 1:1-9:50*, vol. 1, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1994), 813.

gang stepped out of the shadows and demanded your money. They would have great power over you but no authority. While you are scrambling to get your wallet out of your pocket, a police officer drives up in his car. He, of course, has authority over the gang, but unless he gets a lot of backup, he has no power to do anything.

Well, when Jesus sent out his twelve apostles to do ministry, he gave them both **power and authority**. They had the ability and also the right to do ministry in his name. They, like Jesus, had power over demons and disease.

I need to stress that this **power and authority** was given to the twelve apostles in their unique office. It proved that they were indeed messengers sent by the Lord Jesus Christ. However, such miraculous confirmation is no longer needed today. The reason is that God has completed his revelation to us and the canon of Scripture is now closed. All that is needed for faith and life is contained in the inspired, inerrant Word of God.

John MacArthur says, “Even by the end of the book of Acts, miracles were fading from the scene as the apostles disappeared. Paul healed people early in his ministry (cf. Acts 14:0-10; 19:11-12; 28:8), but toward the end of his life, he did not heal Trophimus (2 Timothy 4:20) and advised Timothy not to find a healer, but to treat his recurring stomach ailment with wine (1 Timothy 5:23).”²

So, the empowerment of the apostles was unique. They were given power and authority to do miracles. But, since the close of the New Testament, God’s people no longer have power and authority to do miracles.

However, that does not mean that Jesus has not given authority to his ministers today. After his resurrection, Jesus met with the eleven apostles in Galilee and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go there-

² John MacArthur, *Luke 6-10*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2011), 243.

fore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:18–20). Today, Jesus has given authority to preach the gospel and make disciples.

II. Their Mission (9:2)

Second, notice their mission.

Luke said that Jesus **sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal** (9:2).

In addition to a ministry of healing, the apostles were **to proclaim the kingdom of God**. Jesus himself said that his mission was to “preach the good news of the kingdom of God” (Luke 4:43).

The **kingdom of God** has to do with the rule of God in the lives of his people. Jesus’ message was that God is the king who calls people to submit to his kingship. God is a gracious king who sent his Son to pay for the sin of his people. People simply need to recognize that they are sinners, repent of their sin, put their trust in the person and work of Jesus, and surrender their lives to God’s sovereign and gracious kingship.

This message is still the message that needs to be proclaimed to people today. Together with the apostles “we proclaim the apostolic message of the cross and the empty tomb, announcing that through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, sinners can receive forgiveness from God, with the free gift of eternal life.”³ This proclamation is our primary and fundamental calling. Bishop J. C. Ryle put it well:

[Preaching] is, in fact, God’s chosen instrument for doing

³ Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke*, Vol. 1: Chapters 1-12, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 422.

good to souls. By it sinners are converted, inquirers led on, and saints built up. A preaching ministry is absolutely essential to the health and prosperity of a visible church. The pulpit is the place where the chief victories of the Gospel have always been won, and no Church has ever done much for the advancement of true religion in which the pulpit has been neglected.⁴

III. Their Instructions (9:3-5)

Third, note their instructions.

Jesus gave the apostles instructions about how they were to go about their mission. He gave them instructions regarding their luggage, lodging, and reception.

A. *Regarding Luggage (9:3)*

First, notice their instructions regarding luggage.

In verse 3 Jesus **said to them, “Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not have two tunics.”**

Jesus’ wanted his apostles to travel light. Philip Ryken said:

By way of comparison, former Philadelphia Eagles quarterback Koy Detmer once told reporters that he wore only one set of clothes on team road trips for the entire season. He never carried any luggage. But even Mr. Detmer, as light as he traveled, said that he stuck a toothbrush in his back pocket before he got on the airplane to leave town. The apostles traveled even lighter: no clothes, no food, no money – just the sandals and the robes on their backs. They were not even allowed to take a bag, perhaps because this might give the impression that they were beggars.⁵

⁴ J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on Luke*, vol. 1 (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1879), 292.

⁵ Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke*, 426.

Some have concluded that ministers and missionaries should travel the same way today. They should not take supplies or ask for financial support. But we need to remember that these instructions were given to the twelve apostles and not to the rest of the church. Interestingly, at the conclusion of the Lord's Supper on the night of his betrayal, Jesus said to the apostles, "When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?" They said, "Nothing." Then he said to them, "But now let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one" (Luke 22:35-36).

Jesus wanted his apostles to travel light on that first short-term missions trip so that they would learn to trust him completely for everything, even their basic needs.

B. Regarding Lodging (9:4)

Second, notice their instructions regarding lodging.

Jesus said in verse 4, **"And whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart."**

Traveling false teachers moved from house to house, collecting money from each household. Jesus did not want his apostles to do that. They were to be content with their lodging.

C. Regarding Reception (9:5)

And third, notice their instructions regarding their reception.

Jesus said 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."**

Kent Hughes asks, "Does this suggest a short-fused, hostile approach to spreading the gospel?" He responds by saying,

“Not at all! Rather, it was a dramatically gracious warning to those who rejected the kingdom message.”⁶

Commentator Leon Morris explains what shaking the dust from the feet means:

There was a 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 . . . declared in symbol that Israelites who rejected the kingdom were no better than Gentiles. They did not belong to the people of God.⁷

Rejecting the message of the kingdom of God was serious.

IV. Their Obedience (9:6)

Fourth, observe their obedience.

Luke said in verse 6 that after they received their instructions, the twelve **departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.**

The twelve apostles successfully accomplished their internship. The training wheels had come off and they were doing ministry on their own!

V. Their Effect (9:7-9)

And finally, look at their effect.

Luke said in verses 7-8 that **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**

⁶ R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: That You May Know the Truth*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 325.

⁷ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to St. Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 164.

the dead, by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the prophets of old had risen.

It is hard to know what is included in the phrase **“all that was happening.”** Herod heard about Jesus’ preaching and healing ministry, and he also heard about the apostles’ preaching and healing ministry in Jesus’ name. As Phil Ryken points out, “This is the perfect model for Christian ministry: touching people’s lives in a way that leaves them deeply impressed – not with us, but with our Savior.”⁸

Then **Herod said, “John I beheaded, but who is this about whom I hear such things?” And he sought to see him** (9:9). Herod was curious. Perhaps his guilty conscience was getting the better of him. Whatever his reason, Herod was asking the right question, **“Who is this?”**

That is the question that Luke constantly poses – and answers – in his Gospel. In his Gospel Luke reveals more and more about who Jesus is.

Herod never did get it right. He never did come to believe that Jesus was the Son of God who came to seek and to save the lost. Herod was interested in Jesus, but not enough to repent of his sin and put his faith in him.

If you are not a believer today, believe that Jesus is the Son of God and is the only one who can save you from your sin.

Conclusion

During World War II battles in the Pacific, a sailor in a United States submarine was stricken with acute appendicitis and was near death. The nearest surgeon was thousands of miles away. The sailor’s friend, Pharmacist Mate Wheller Lipes, watched his temperature rise to 106 degrees. The man’s only hope was an operation. So Lipes said to his seriously ill friend, “I have watched doctors do this operation. I think I can do it.

⁸ Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke*, 429.

What do you say?" The sailor consented.

In the wardroom the patient was stretched out on a table beneath a floodlight. The mate and assisting officers, dressed in reversed pajama tops, masked their faces with gauze. The crew stood by the diving planes to keep the ship steady. The cook boiled water for sterilizing. A tea strainer served as an antiseptic cone. A broken-handled scalpel was the operating instrument. Alcohol drained from the torpedoes was the antiseptic. Bent tablespoons kept the muscles open.

After cutting through the layers of muscle, the mate took twenty minutes to find the appendix. Two and a half hours later, the last catgut stitch was sewn just as the last drop of ether gave out. Thirteen days later the sailor was back at work.⁹

It was a great accomplishment, greater than the appendectomies done by surgeons. Not because it was better, for it was not, but because an unskilled shipmate performed the surgery.

Jesus sent the twelve apostles on a short-term missions trip. They may have felt as under-prepared as Pharmacist Mate Wheller Lipes, but they had watched the Master in action for eighteen months. And there were thousands upon thousands of people who were deathly ill – spiritually speaking. Their initial short-term missions trip was the first of a lifelong ministry. They did not know it at the time, but their ministry laid the foundation for a ministry that has led to the salvation of literally billions of lives since the first century.

Let us proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God. Let us proclaim the apostolic message of the cross and the empty tomb, announcing that through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, sinners can receive forgiveness from God, with the free gift of eternal life. Amen.

⁹ Donald Grey Barnhouse, *Let Me Illustrate* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1967), 358-359.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.*

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PRAYER:

Father, thank you for the account of Jesus sending out the twelve apostles on their first short-term missions trip. They went preaching and healing with the power and authority that you gave to Jesus.

The message about the kingdom of God is still the same message that saves sinners today.

Oh God, if there is anyone here today that has not yet put his or her faith in Jesus, will you grant that person saving faith.

And for this we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

BENEDICTION:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and always. Amen.

CHARGE:

Now, brothers and sisters, go and serve God wholeheartedly!