

08-26-2018

Message: Humility Comes Before Greatness

Text: Luke 9:37-50

Introduction

- A. Did you ever lie awake in the dark, unable to go to sleep? Between 1 AM and 4 AM Friday morning, I was wide awake in bed, praying to the Lord to give me the sleep I so much needed. But my prayers then turned to a greater need. Did you ever become aware that the depth of your faith in Jesus, the depth of your love for Jesus is far too shallow, and ask for grace to love and trust Him more?
- B. Do you think that we more typically assume that we are believing/trusting in Jesus more quickly than we actually are, following Him more closely than we actually are, loving Him more deeply than we actually are? Do you think that too infrequently we see our hearts as the Lord sees them, and that we need reality checks more often than we experience them?
- C. When we come to chapter 9 verse 51 we will see that our risen Christ inspired Luke to make a literary turn in his gospel account. There we see Jesus resolutely sets His face to journey to Jerusalem. It will be his final journey there, for this is His journey to the cross.

Luke 9:51 When the days were approaching for His ascension, **He was determined (Gk: set His face) to go to Jerusalem;**

- D. Through this literary turn, Jesus invites all of us who hear and read to follow Him to Jerusalem, to deny ourselves, take up our crosses daily, and follow Jesus as Lord and Messiah. Jesus had just previously taught His disciples the meaning and cost of being His follower, being His disciple, being a Christian, along with the surpassing, eternal blessings of being Christ's disciples. But are the disciples ready to follow Jesus on the journey? Are we?

Luke 9:23 And He was saying to *them* all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. ²⁴ "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. ²⁵ "For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself? ²⁶ "For whoever 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 of the holy angels.

E. Between His teaching on following Him as His disciples and the beginning of His final journey to Jerusalem, our Lord Jesus Messiah has inspired Luke to record in Luke 9:37-50 four situations following Christ's transfiguration that show us that the faith of His disciples was not what they assumed it to be, that their hearts were slower to believe Him, slower to humble and deny themselves, slower to take up their crosses and follow Him than they assumed. Jesus had Luke record this for subsequent generations of believers, not to disparage His disciples's blindness to their own hearts, but to provide through them a mirror to our own hearts, to provide us with our own reality checks for our own souls' good, that we might be ready and quick of heart to follow Jesus to the cross.

I. 9:37-42 Heart revealing situation #1.

Luke 9:37 On the next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met Him.³⁸ And a man from the crowd shouted, saying, "Teacher, I beg You to look at my son, for he is my only *boy*,³⁹ and a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly screams, and it throws him into a convulsion with foaming *at the mouth*; and only with difficulty does it leave him, mauling him *as it leaves* .⁴⁰ **I begged Your disciples to cast it out, and they could not.**⁴¹ **And Jesus answered and said, "You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you and put up with you? Bring your son here."**⁴² While he was still approaching, the demon slammed him *to the ground* and threw him into a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and healed the boy and gave him back to his father.

A. Jesus has Luke omit the famous exchange between Jesus and the boy's father that Mark records:

Mark 9:22 "It has often thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!"²³ And Jesus said to him, "'If You can?' All things are possible to him who believes."²⁴ Immediately the boy's father cried out and said, "**I do believe; help my unbelief.**"

B. Perhaps it is because Christ's emphasis in Luke is on what His disciples are lacking. They appear included in Christ's expression of displeasure with this generation's a lack of faith in Him. Matthew's parallel account confirms a problem with the disciples' faith. The compound Greek word, "oligopistia" = littleness of faith is a term used in Matthew and Luke for a lapse of faith in true believers, when we momentarily take our eyes off of Jesus, doubt Jesus, and function like unbelievers.

Matthew 17:19 Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not drive it out?"²⁰ And He said to them, "**Because of the littleness of your faith (oligopistia)**; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.

Matthew 14:30 But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!"³¹ Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, "You of **little faith (oligopistos), why did you doubt?**"

C. The disciples had been commissioned, empowered, and sent out by Jesus to preach the gospel of His kingdom, to heal the sick and cast out all demons. But something now was lacking in their faith in Christ's provision for their ministry. They didn't think so - they had to ask why they failed.

Luke 9:1 And He called the twelve together and **gave them power and authority over all the demons** and to heal diseases.² And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing.

D. Question: Is there anything Jesus empowers and asks us to do that we are slow to do if at all? Is it because we don't believe His presence with us, His Spirit's provision for us is sufficient?

II. 9:43-45 Heart revealing situation #2

A. Jesus succeeded where His disciples failed and drew rave responses from the crowd. But while others focused on His popularity and greatness of power, Jesus spoke soberly to His disciples to give them a reality check. If they thought discipleship meant riding Christ's coat tails to prestige, popularity, a position of status and glory in this life, they failed to understand what it meant to be a disciple. If we seek great things for ourselves in this life, we can't simultaneously seek to deny ourselves for Christ.

Luke 9:43 And they were all amazed at the greatness of God. But while **everyone was marveling** at all that He was doing, He said to His disciples,⁴⁴ "**Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men.**"⁴⁵ But they did not understand this statement, and it was concealed from them so that they would not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask Him about this statement.

1. They did not truly understand (or even want to understand?) His previous words calling them to follow Him in self-denial and suffering as a way of life.
2. It was not in their world view that God's Messiah would suffer, appear defeated by His foes. Their hearts were slow to believe the Scriptures about the Messiah's path to glory, and a disciple's path to glory.

Luke 24:24 "Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see."²⁵ And He said to them, "**O foolish men and slow of heart to believe** in all that the prophets have spoken!"²⁶ "**Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?**"²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

Romans 8:17 and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, **if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.**

Proverbs 15:33 The fear of the LORD is the instruction for wisdom, and **before honor comes humility.**

Jeremiah 45:1 *This is* the message which Jeremiah the prophet spoke to Baruch the son of Neriah, when he had written down these words in a book at Jeremiah's dictation, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, saying: ² "Thus says the LORD the God of Israel to you, O Baruch: ³ 'You said, "Ah, woe is me! For the LORD has added sorrow to my pain; I am weary with my groaning and have found no rest.'" ⁴ "Thus you are to say to him, "Thus says the LORD, "Behold, what I have built I am about to tear down, and what I have planted I am about to uproot, that is, the whole land." ⁵ **'But you, are you seeking great things for yourself? Do not seek them;** for behold, I am going to bring disaster on all flesh,' declares the LORD, 'but I will give your life to you as booty in all the places where you may go.'"

III. 9:46-48 Heart revealing situation #3

- A. No wonder the disciples could not understand how God's Messiah in all His greatness could suffer and die at the hands of His foes. They did not see humility as the path to honor. They sought greatness by comparing themselves to others rather than conforming themselves to the humble Jesus.

Luke 9:46 An argument started among them as to which of them might be the greatest. ⁴⁷ But Jesus, knowing what they were thinking in their hearts, took a child and stood him by His side, ⁴⁸ and said to them, "Whoever receives this child in My name receives Me, and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me; for **the one who is least among all of you, this is the one who is great.**"

- B. Our risen Christ was concerned about the lack of humility in His churches that He inspired Paul to caution us about thinking too highly of our own ministries over the ministries of others.

Romans 12:3 For through the grace given to me I say to **everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think;** but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. ⁴ For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, ⁵ so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶ **Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us,** if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; ⁷ if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

- B. When we refuse to regard others and their needs/desires as more important than our own, we reveal we are slow of heart to believe Jesus, to love Jesus, to love being like Jesus. We don't believe and trust Jesus when He says it is more blessed to give than to receive, to serve rather than to be served.

Philippians 2:3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but **with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;** ⁴ do not *merely* look out for your own

personal interests, but also for the interests of others.⁵ **Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,**

IV. 9:49-50 Heart revealing situation #4

- A. The disciples could not cast out a demon in Jesus's name, but did not want the ministry of others in Jesus's name to eclipse theirs. Their level of cluelessness to their own souls is exemplified here.

Luke 9:49 John answered and said, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name; and **we tried to prevent him because he does not follow along with us.**"⁵⁰ But Jesus said to him, "Do not hinder *him*; for he who is not against you is for you."

- B. Were they protecting their own glory, and not rejoicing in Christ's name being glorified? What shallow love for Christ. They refused partnership with one they did not regard as having the same status as themselves - who, ironically, did by faith in Jesus's name what they just failed to do.

Conclusion

- A. David Brainerd, who died at age 29, was a friend Jonathan Edwards and missionary to Native Americans in Colonial New Jersey, New England. I read a striking quote from his diary where he said, "Oh that God would humble me deeply in the dust before Him! I deserve Hell every day for not loving my Lord more, who has, I trust, loved me and given Himself for me." I thought to myself, "I've never been quite this aware of how shallow my level of love for the Lord is. I must be like Jesus's disciples."
- B. Do you think that too infrequently we see our hearts as the Lord sees them? Has Christ this day through His Word used His disciples as a mirror to our own hearts before Him? Has their shallowness of love for Christ, littleness of faith and slowness of heart to believe, obey, and follow Christ been profitable to us? Do you think that we too infrequently pray to the Lord as He teaches us to pray to Him in the Psalms, asking that He search and test our hearts for our good, to expose to us anything harmful, so that our hearts might be quick to believe and follow Him? Let's use this opportunity to pray this way now.

(Unison)

Psalm 139:23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts;²⁴ and see if there be any hurtful way in me and lead me in the everlasting way.