

Getting About The Calling

Today, as we continue our study of these scriptures given in chapter 6 of the Book of Luke, you'll recall that the Lord Jesus had separated Himself out into a secluded place on a mountain all the night before where He had been in fervent prayer with His Father, praying about the choices that He should make concerning the selection of His disciples. And when day had come, Jesus had called His disciples to Himself and had chosen from them twelve special men, whom He also named Apostles. And from there, we see that He and His disciples came down from the mountain and immediately got about the work that God His Father had sent Him to do.

As I have pondered these and other scriptures like them here in these gospels, and as I am able to witness the passion, the intensity and the commitment of the Lord Jesus and of His disciples, a question comes often to my mind. The question . . . "How committed and how passionate is my own faith?" And I would ask the same of you . . . "How passionate, how committed is your faith?"

And how conscientious, how diligent, am I, are you, when it comes to our intentionally getting on about our part of the ministry that God has called us to as His disciples?"

Listen to these words given to us here in Luke chapter 6, beginning in verse 17.

¹⁷And Jesus came down with His disciples and stood on a level place with a crowd of His disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear Him and be healed of their diseases, ¹⁸as well as those who were tormented with unclean spirits. And they were healed. ¹⁹And the whole multitude sought to touch Him, for power went out from Him and healed them all. (Luke 6:17-19)

Again, note in these words that after Jesus had chosen those twelve special men to be His disciples, He immediately came down from the mountain and got about the work that God, His Father had sent Him to do.

There is no mention here of Jesus being tired from a lack of sleep or needing to stop to rest. He knew very well the plan that lay ahead of Him. And He trusted that the strength of the Holy Spirit who dwelled within Him would enable Him to go on beyond any human frailty that He might encounter. Those words in Zechariah 4,

Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the Lord of hosts.
(Zechariah 4:6)

Jesus' response here was very much like the response He would have on another occasion later on when He was asked about being hungry. There He said,

³⁴ . . . "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. ³⁵Do you not say, 'There are still four months and *then* comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! (Luke 4:34-35)

Note the intensity in those words. Jesus knew that the time was short, and that the day of salvation was at hand. And He knew that if He was going to carry out the will of His Father, He would need to be very intentional about every moment that lay in front of Him.

And Jesus' response should serve as a special instruction and a warning to you and me. If we will only look around us, we will also see that the fields are white for harvest. And we dare not wait! We must get about it now.

The lost are truly lost and their condition is getting worse with each day. And if they die in their sin, they will be lost eternally.

The reality of that truth came to my thoughts just recently when I recalled a time when a person said about their friend who had been suffering really badly and had just died, that now their friend was in a "better place". As I heard those words, I immediately wondered if that person who died was truly saved. Because if that person was not saved, they were not in a "better place". In fact, their suffering that they endured while in this life was now magnified a thousand-fold. And their suffering would now never end, but would be eternal, with no relief at all. How awful! How utterly unthinkable!

May I say this again folks, because we need to realize that the lost are truly lost. And not only is their condition getting worse with each day in this life. When they die in their sin, they will be lost and suffering eternally.

And whether you and I want to realize it or not, we have some responsibility for the future of other people's souls. That warning was given to the prophet Ezekiel concerning the people of Israel, and it is also true for you and me. Listen to God's words of warning to the prophet in Ezekiel 33! There, God said,

⁷ “Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me. ⁸When I say to the wicked, ‘O wicked man, you will surely die,’ and (if) you do not speak out to dissuade him from his ways, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. ⁹But if you do warn the wicked man to turn from his ways and he does not do so, he will die for his sin, but you will have saved yourself. (Ezekiel 33:7-9)

These words given to the Prophet Ezekiel were for him in his day. But also, here in our scripture text in the Book of Luke, we know that those same words were especially also intended for the Lord Jesus. He is the “Son of Man” who was sent by God the Father to warn the wicked ones of His day and also consequently, us in our day, saying “turn from your sin or you will surely die.” And the Lord Jesus was diligent to give that warning.

But also for the Lord Jesus, He knew that the special work He was called to do required that He suffer and die on the cross. And that meant that His work would soon be cut short leaving much more still yet to be done. That is why he chose these other “sons of men”, His disciples, to join with Him and to carry His work on forward.

But His choosing of these twelve disciples was only the beginning. He would call many, many more into His work. And the demanding impetus given in the “great commission” to “go ye into all the world and to make more and more disciples”, has reached even to you and me. We are now the disciples that are to carry the message of Jesus’ gospel to every soul that will ever live, with you and me producing more and more disciples.

And you and I must respond to this call. The fields were “white for harvest” then, and they are also “white for harvest” today. Souls are suffering and dying every day and you and I are the “sons of men” that God has called and equipped to warn them. We must do as Jesus did and diligently get on about completing the work that He began.

Jesus told us that in John chapter 20. There He said

²¹ . . . as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. (John 20:21)

And in Colossians 1, the Apostle Paul gave us these words. He said

²⁴I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, ²⁵of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from

God, which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God. (Colossians 1:24-25)

You and I also are to fill up in our flesh that which is still lacking in work that Christ began. Jesus did not hesitate, and neither did the Apostle Paul, and neither should we. Jesus chose His disciples, then came down from the mountain and immediately got about doing His Father's work.

. . . But if we are to be about it, what exactly is the work that Jesus began? Here, we are told that He healed the sick, He cast out demons and He taught and preached the good news of salvation.

A question, "are you and I called to be about the exact same "will and purpose of God the Father", preaching, teaching, healing the sick and even casting out demons? The answer to that question is clear from these scriptures that I just read in John chapter 20.

²¹Then said Jesus to them . . . as *my* Father hath sent me, even so send I you. (John 20:21)

No, you and I can't save another person's soul as Jesus could. But beyond that, we are to be about the very same Will and purpose of God. And He will surely equip us with every Spiritual Gift that it will take for us to carry forward His ministry. If we are to "preach", He will equip us to preach. If we are to teach, He will equip us to teach.

And yes, and strangely so, there will be times when we will participate in the healing of the sick and even the casting out of demons. And I know that even the thought of our doing those things can make us uncomfortable. And we really should guard ourselves carefully before stepping into uncertain territory. But I do believe that such things, though they be on the fringe of the ministry God has called us to do, they are still very much in keeping with God's truth as it is given within these scriptures.

As for our being teachers and preachers of this gospel, we need to always remind ourselves that the wisdom and the strength to carry out God's ministry must come directly and solely from the Holy Spirit that He puts within us. And again, the Holy Spirit Himself will carefully befit each of us with the exact "Spiritual Gifts" that we will need to do the work in front of us.

And no, not everyone will have the Spiritual Gifts of teaching and preaching, but we need to be diligent to search out the will of God to see if we are gifted in those ways, and if we are, then we must get about them.

But if we are not, then we must do other things that will help and support those who are gifted in those ways. And there again, God's Spirit is faithful to properly equip us with the special spiritual gifts that we will need to do our part, Spiritual Gifts such as, wisdom, knowledge, serving, giving, deeds of compassion, exhorting, works of administration, and on and on.

All that God asks of us is that we willingly open our hearts up to Him and He will do the rest. Our part may simply be to attend a weekly bible study, or perhaps to host a bible study in our home. Maybe God would have us to become a mentor to a new believer and to disciple them. Again, all that God asks of us is that we be willing to open our hearts up to Him and to let Him guide our path.

Next, we see that as Jesus preached and taught the people, He also healed those who were sick. I confess that I know so very little about this form of ministry. I truly do wish that I knew more. I am personally aware of some people that God has healed. And He has especially brought healing to my own body, on more than one occasion.

But I do not fully know all of the ways that I am to go about participating in the healing of the sick. What I do know is what we are taught here in the scriptures and especially what is taught to us in the Book of James. There we are told that if we are sick, we are to take the matter to the Elders of the church. Listen to these words given in James chapter 5.

¹⁴Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. (James 5:14-15)

This is the pure and unsullied truth of God. And I believe that we should do this far more often than we do. Unfortunately, we most often, bypass our Elders and opt out for a quick trip to the doctor. And that would not necessarily be a wrong thing to do. Doctors are often the instrument of God to dispense His grace and mercy to you and to me. I recently went to an Eye Doctor to have a cataract removed. I believe that it was a right thing to do.

But the question we should ask ourselves is, "are doctors the first and only remedy that we should choose?" What about the simple, "laying on of hands" for the healing of a person? Is that form of healing real and effectual for you and for me, now, in our day, or was that gift of healing only for the days that Jesus walked this earth? There are varying opinions among the best of Bible Scholars about such things. And the scriptures are not clear about it.

But because these scriptures do not specifically prohibit the “laying on of hands” for the healing of a person, I believe that it is a right thing for us to do. I have done that on occasion, along with some other Elders of the church. And I have also, on many occasions, in a quiet and private way, most of the time without the other person even knowing that I am doing it, “laid hands on them”, asking God to heal them of their sickness or disease?

Have the people been healed of their sickness or disease by my doing that? Most often I do not know. And as I ponder the matter, I have come to accept the simple truth that sometimes it is the will of God to heal that person and sometimes it is not His will.

I believe that our calling is simply to obey the compulsion of the Holy Spirit within us. If we feel compelled to “lay hands upon a person” and to pray for their healing, then we should do that.

Do I have the “Spiritual Gift” of healing? I truly don’t know if I do or not? I would like for God to reveal the answer to that question to me, but so far, he hasn’t. So, I will simply continue to do as the Holy Spirit compels my heart to do and leave the rest of it to God.

This last matter that we will consider today, I confess, is very mysterious and very uncomfortable for me, the matter of the “casting out of demons?” Again, the question, are we to also take part in the “casting out of demons?”

As I have said to us often, I am fully convinced that the demonic realm is still just as powerfully at work today as it was in Jesus’ day. Why should we believe any differently, with the evidence so blatantly obvious all around us?

Demons are active and powerful, and demons do what demons do. They are spoken about in John chapter 10 as being the thief who comes to steal, to kill and to destroy. And they do that in many ways and as often as they can, in the world at large, in our families, and in each of our own personal lives.

Here in the scriptures, the demons are often described as unclean spirits. And we see their presence in several places in these scriptures, in the man in the synagogue, in the little daughter of the Canaanite woman, in the young boy who would throw himself into the fire and into the water, in the man who had a spirit that made him deaf and dumb, in the man in the tombs, and on and on, demons taking control over people and causing everything from physical health problems to emotional and mental problems.

Folks, these scriptures are telling us that demonic influence can manifest itself in many different forms. And because of that, I am fully convinced that some, perhaps many of the symptoms and behaviors we call physical and mental illness in today's culture might instead be demonic influence. And so yes, I believe that we are to "cast out demons".

But how are we to do that? Should we have exorcisms as the Catholics do? I personally don't think so. Jesus simply laid hands upon people and prayed for them, and the demons came out of them. I would suggest that that is exactly what you and I should do.

And no, we don't have to always make a public display of it. We can simply and quietly pray for God to bring them relief from their condition, whatever the cause may be. And we need to remember that whatever takes place is part of God's ministry through us and He will take care of anything that we are unprepared for.

Let me close with these words. You and I are disciples of Christ, and yes, sons of God. And we daily live within God's Kingdom territory. And as His sons, we have the responsibilities that sons and daughters have over the territory and the kingdom of our Father. And as His sons and daughters, we are commanded to get on out and get about doing the ministry that God, our Father has prepared us for. And we need to do that, today.

Those words again from John chapter 20,

²¹ . . . Jesus (said) to them . . . as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. (John 20:21)

Let's pray.