

Jesus Sent Them Forth

Over these many weeks of our study of this precious Book of Luke, we've been privileged to witness the loving ministry of the Lord Jesus as He preached and taught the truths of God. And how He reached into the lives of many that He met along the way to heal their sicknesses and diseases, drove out demons and even brought the dead back to life.

And now here in the scripture passage that I'll read for us in a moment given in Luke chapter 9, we are given the special privilege of seeing the next step of God's perfect plan for the unfolding of the gospel, the "sending forth" of the disciples to begin the work that the Lord Jesus had prepared for them to do.

You'll recall from when we studied the words given to us in chapter 6, that there was an occasion when the Lord Jesus called his faithful followers to Himself and from them He carefully chose twelve of them to be His intimate disciples. Let me read those words for us, there given in chapter 6 of Luke, beginning in verse 12. Listen!

¹² Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. ¹³ And when it was day, He called His disciples to *Himself*; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles: ¹⁴ Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; James and John; Philip and Bartholomew; ¹⁵ Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called the Zealot; ¹⁶ Judas *the son* of James, and Judas Iscariot who also became a traitor. (Luke 6:12-16)

Now here, in today's passage, after these same disciples had traveled with Jesus for some time, learning the truths of the gospel as He preached them to the people, it was time for these disciples to step forward and to begin to do their part, to "preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick". Listen to these precious words of the Lord Jesus. Chapter 9, verse 1 . . .

¹ Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. ² He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. ³ And He said to them, "Take nothing for the journey, neither staffs nor bag nor bread nor money; and do not have two tunics apiece.

⁴“Whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. ⁵And whoever will not receive you, when you go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet as a testimony against them.”

⁶So they departed and went through the towns, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere. (Luke 9:1-6)

Faith is an absolute necessity for every step that we take in our journey with Christ. And here, Jesus is training His disciples in the discipline of faith.

By this time, the disciples had been traveling with Jesus for a while and no doubt their personal faith in Him was growing with each witness of His power and miracles. And also, their faith was surely being encouraged by the faith they saw in others, the woman who had just been healed from her long illness, the synagogue leader whose daughter had been brought back from the dead, and many others.

But for the most part, until this time, the disciples had always had Jesus right with them exercising faith for them, providing for all their needs. But now, Jesus was asking them to do something very new and different. He was asking them to take a step forward and to go out on a missionary journey without Him. That meant that they would now be required to have and to exercise their own faith, independent of His presence.

These scriptures don't give us a view of the disciples response, so we don't know just how certain or uncertain they might have felt in those beginning moments. But as I've been saying for some time now, God's plan for our faith is a step by step, moment by moment provision. He empowers us by the unction of the Holy Spirit to take a step forward, but we must actually be the one to move our feet. He does not often move our feet for us.

But then, as we do move our feet, as we take that first step of faith then He, the Spirit of Christ, mysteriously works within our movements to empower not only that step, but also our next step, and then our next. Our example being one that I have given often to us, that of the Levites as they took their first steps into the waters of the Jordan and then God parting the waters beneath their feet with each step that they took. What an exhilarating experience that must have been for the Israelite people, and how it must have encouraged their faith.

Here in this passage, Jesus told His disciples that it was time for them to go out and to begin the first steps of a soon-to-be lifelong missionary journey, a wonderful and exhilarating journey, but also a very dangerous one, one that would eventually cost most all of them their very lives.

But looking back, we know that these first simple steps by these men were to be the beginning steps of the greatest venture, the greatest undertaking that mankind would ever embark upon. It was the beginning of the church, the beginning of this precious religion we now call Christianity.

Those disciples had no idea the immense importance of those first steps that Jesus was calling them to take. On the grand scale of all the people on the earth, it might seem insignificant that twelve men would go out and begin to spread the gospel. But not so! Their efforts provided the spark that ignited the belief and the faith that you and I now have in our hearts today. And their efforts are the reason that we are sitting here in this church today. And you and I must be willing to step forward in our own faith and to grab hold of that same vision that Jesus was passing along to this twelve.

Folks, this is the way that God goes about building His church, one, or perhaps a few, responding in faith and stepping forward. And these simple verses of today's text give us the blueprint for His plan. Here we are told that He "calls" us, He "equips" us and He "sends" us out.

He places a call, a deep and compelling urge within a person's heart. He then fills that person with mysterious spiritual power and gifts, power and gifts that they never possessed before. And then He places a strong desire within that person's heart to rise up and to go to special places, places where they might never before have imagined they would want to go.

Abraham didn't at first know where he was to go. God's plan was not immediately made clear to him. But Abraham simply in faith took the first step in front of him. And he kept taking that next step until he eventually reached his destination in Canaan. And because of Abraham's faith, his family, the Israelite people, ultimately arrived in the Promised Land.

And that also is an important truth for us to grasp. As we take unknown and uncertain steps of faith today, we can be assured that our faith will have a profound impact on many generations to come. These scriptures continually

remind us that the things we do today reverberate out to the third and the fourth generation.

And looking back at those first steps by these twelve faithful disciples, we can clearly see the future impact of their faithful response to Jesus' call.

The question for you and me today is, "Do we believe that Jesus has placed a special call upon our heart?" "Would we even recognize His call when it comes to us?" Granted, it was probably much easier for those first disciples then because Jesus was right there in front of them, speaking out loud to them, and urging them on, both with His own miracles, and especially with promises that they too would be able to perform many of the same miracles.

Jesus would say to His disciples on another occasion,

¹² "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it. (John 14:12-14)

The reality is folks, all of those same promises that Jesus made to those first disciples are also true for you and me. All we have to do for those same promises to become a reality in our experience is for us to take the same simple steps of faith that they took.

The "Great Commission" given to those same disciples a short time later is also intended for you and me, personally and individually. And while we might not be able to grasp the vision for our casting out demons and healing the sick, we are nonetheless commanded to step on forward in faith. Listen to these words in Matthew 26.

¹⁸ And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. (Matthew 26:18-20)

Yes, this call, this equipping, and this sending out was for those disciples then, but it is also intended for you and for me now personally. And our response to

Jesus must be to simply say, “Yea” and “Amen”. He “calls” us, He “equips” us and He “sends” us.

Listen again to those words in our text in Luke 9, verse 1,

¹Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. ²He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. (Luke 9:1-2)

Here, Jesus “called” His disciples together. He then “equipped” them with power and authority over demons and to cure diseases, and then He “sent them out” to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.

A question that might come to mind is, “How would those disciples, and how would you and I know how to preach the kingdom of God?” Would it be because they, and we, have been watching and hearing the words that Jesus preached? Yes, that would have been true, both for them then and for us now. And for us especially because we now have the written word recorded for us here in these scriptures.

But folks, another essential element was true for those twelve disciples as they went forth. The “gospel” that Jesus was preaching and teaching were all “brand new words of truth”. Yes, much of that truth had been given in the Old Testament, but up until these days of Jesus had been veiled from the understanding of the people. But now, it was being given out by the Lord Jesus, and here, Jesus was also giving the disciples the ability to preach those “brand new words of truth” to the people, just as He was doing.

And just as God had beforehand put new and Holy Words into the mouths of men like Moses and Aaron, and Prophets like Jeremiah, and others, so also would He have put His Holy Words into the mouths of those disciples as they went out to preach and to teach the Kingdom of God to the people. That is one of the precious gifts of the Holy Spirit. And I’m sure that the Holy Spirit gave them every word they needed to say.

Listen to these words given in Matthew chapter 10. There, Jesus told His disciples,
¹⁹ . . . do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. ²⁰ For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. (Matthew 10:19-20)

And God's Holy Spirit will surely do much the same for you and for me. He will bring to our minds words that we have learned as we have studied His scriptures, but also words of truth that we might not even remember studying, words of truth that will often surprise even us. It is a mysterious but wonderful thing that God will do through us as we step forward and speak forth His gospel.

And note here also in these words that Jesus also equipped His disciples with other spiritual gifts that were immediately powerful and effectual, the gifts to heal the sick and the authority to drive out demons. Those were Jesus' own powers that He entrusted into the hands of those common men, a trust that must be greatly honored and carefully administered.

These disciples were "called" by Jesus, they were "equipped" by Him to do all the things that He called them to do, and then they were "sent" to carry out their calling. And they responded to Jesus' calling in exactly the right way. And they prospered in the things for which they were sent. Those words from God, given in Isaiah 55:11 . . .

¹¹ So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me empty, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper *in the thing* for which I sent it. (Isaiah 55:11)

This folks is the way and the power of the true word of God. It will prosper and it cannot fail.

But again, those disciples, and you and I, are an essential part of the "great equation" that God has designed for the gospel. Those disciple's part and also our part is to step forward in faith. And you'll note again here that Jesus deliberately put His disciples into a position where they would have to live each moment of this first missionary journey by faith. Verse 3,

³And He said to them "Take nothing for the journey, neither staffs nor bag nor bread nor money; and do not have two tunics apiece. (Luke 9:3)

The disciples were to take nothing with them. They were to depend upon the provision of God that would flow through the hands of the people they would meet along the way.

That folks was a very clever thing that God did. God's plans always involve everyone and requires everyone to do their part. The disciples, in going out with

absolutely nothing in hand to provide for their own care, required faith on their part, but also required that the people they encountered be sensitive to the personal needs of the disciples and to provide for them.

And folks, that too is a very special message for you and me. As for myself, too often, I try to do everything myself and require very little of others. That might seem right at the time, but it most often is not.

And perhaps even, in the doing of everything ourselves and asking nothing of others, there is even some sin on our part. Various forms of pride are quite often the sinful motivators for our refusal to ask favors from others.

But here, Jesus puts both sides of this missionary equation into motion. He required the disciples to take nothing with them, knowing very well that they would surely get hungry, they would get dirty from all their walking, they would need a place to sleep and they would need a place to preach their "gospel".

The other side of the missionary equation would be the people that they would meet. The people would need to listen to the prompting of the Holy Spirit within them and to learn immediately to be "givers", givers of hospitality, of food, of lodging and of their own hearts. This is the secret prompting of the Holy Spirit.

Folks, in God's plan, both sides of the gospel equation will always be required. It is a good plan and it works well.

Let me ask you about your response to God's plan. First, are you a missionary? You should be! The "Great Commission" requires you to be. By faith, you are to give the gospel of Christ at every opportunity.

On the other side of the equation, are you a giver? For those missionaries serving in other lands, do you supply them with food and clothing and other provisions? You should, and you must, even when you don't think you can afford it! God will always supply you with all the money you will need.

And for those folks who are near to you, do you willingly invite them into your home? Do you joyfully provide them food, even when you don't think that you can afford it? Do you take people out to lunch or dinner?

A more intimate question . . . how many times have you even invited one of these other church members to eat with you? I recall, in another church I attended, how a dear elderly lady used to regularly invite me to eat biscuits and sausage with her at lunch after church. I enjoyed those biscuits and sausages. Most of all, I enjoyed her Christian fellowship.

I encourage you . . . be a missionary, beginning in this congregation and in this neighborhood. Give the gospel and give of yourself to people. God has called you to do that.

But not only that, He has fully equipped you with all that you need to do anything He asks of you. And according to the words of the "Great Commission" you have also been sent out to do it! So, Go Ye, into this congregation, and Go Ye into these neighborhoods and preach this gospel.

And at every opportunity, receive others into your home and joyfully make provision for them.

Listen as we close,

⁶So (the disciples) departed and went through the towns, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere. (Luke 9:6)

Let's pray.