

## Luke (chapter 9)

### I. Jesus sends out the 12

(Luke 9:1-6) When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, 2 and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. 3 He told them: "Take nothing for the journey--no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra tunic. 4 Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. 5 If people do not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave their town, as a testimony against them." 6 So they set out and went from village to village, preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere.

A. Previously, Jesus had been reluctant to have people talk about him. Now he is sending out apostles as ambassadors (the literal meaning of "*apostolos*").

B. "Called the Twelve together" likely means some were away. At least 5 had homes in Capernaum and they may well have been visiting family or such like.

C. Why did Jesus not allow them to take food, money, or a change of clothes?

1. Presumably to teach them that God would care for them not matter what, in preparation for their future service after Jesus was gone.

2. It was like survival training in the military. The military doesn't intend to make troops live off the land, but they need to know that they can so they aren't afraid to go into strange places where support from home isn't certain.

D. Why tell them not to change where they live?

1. I have no idea

2. It may effectively limit how long they could stay in a town. Benjamin Franklin: "Fish and visitors stink after 3 days"!

3. Or maybe it's to avoid the insult of searching out better quarters. Hence—"accept whatever housing you have, no matter how simple."

4. Or to avoid the distraction of looking for another place.

E. "Shake the dust off your feet" is idiomatic for having nothing to do with that person. Strict Jews shook the dust off their shoes after being among Gentiles, due to the defilement of even the dust they'd walked. Thus, Jesus is saying, "Consider them as Gentiles," or (because Jesus loved the Gentiles), "Consider them as outside God's chosen people."

F. Notice that weren't staying in inns but in homes, as was customary in the day. Hence, they were to enter the village and seek a free house and free meals. If no one accepted them, then it was an inhospitable town (remember the lesson on Sodom!) and hence rejected.

G. What does this command tell us, if anything, about support for missionaries in communities that do not heed their call?

1. Perhaps it means we would prudently move the missionary to whiter fields (or less stony fields).
2. When Paul was unsuccessful, he moved on.

H. It's interesting that Jesus sent the 12 out before he asked for their confession (vv. 18-21). Sometimes we best gain faith through doing. We often try to mature people in class and then put them to work. You actually mature faster and better while working (OTJ training), with classes to help the worker as he faces real world problems.

I. Therefore, no one is too immature to be of service. The service we can do changes, but we don't need 10 years of class work to be witnesses for Jesus.

J. Can WE be witnesses?

1. Of course, because Jesus is alive and living in us—actively working in our lives.

K. The good news was to talk about Jesus. What they'd seen and heard. The message isn't explained to the reader because it's the message we've already heard on Jesus' lips—the Sermon on the Plain, the teachings of John the Baptist, and the power of faith.

L. But it's also to heal. Medical missions and other efforts that deal with physical needs are very Christ-like. Of course, they healed and taught the gospel. The two go together.

M. One of the great heresies found in the Church of Christ is that the “social gospel” is wrong, that is, that's it's wrong to help those in need. It's wrong to separate concern for the physical from concern about the spiritual—but it's equally wrong to separate the spiritual from the physical. God made both soul and body and cares for both. So must we.

N. In Mark's account, we're told Jesus sent them two-by-two. Jesus never meant for us to have to go it alone. He understands the importance of community and having help.

## II. Herod's reaction

(Luke 9:7-9) Now Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was going on. And he was perplexed, because some were saying that John had been raised from the dead, 8 others that Elijah had appeared, and still others that one of the prophets of long ago had come back to life. 9 But Herod said, "I beheaded John. Who, then, is this I hear such things about?" And he tried to see him.

- A. Luke indirectly tells us of John's execution.
- B. Elijah had been prophesied, and so some considered Jesus the fulfillment because he did miracles as Elijah had done. But Jesus tells us that John was the fulfillment.

(Mal 4:5-6) "See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. 6 He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse."

(Mat 17:10-13) The disciples asked him, "Why then do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?" 11 Jesus replied, "To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things. 12 But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands." 13 Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist.

- C. The passage hints that John may have done miracles — this would make him more like Elijah and would have made it easier for Jesus to be confused with John — as they were quite different in many ways. Of course, in John we read the Jesus had people baptized in the Jordan, so that may be the source of the rumors.

D. Exactly how Herod tried to see Jesus we aren't told, or why he failed. Absent God's care, you'd think a man as powerful as Herod could have found Jesus.

- E. This does not bode well for Jesus.

## III. The apostles report

(Luke 9:10-11) When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done. Then he took them with him and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida, 11 but the crowds learned about it and followed him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing.

- A. Bethsaida is outside Herod's jurisdiction.

B. Luke does not tell us what the apostles said. He does later in chapter 10 where Luke records the sending of the 72. We are to conclude that they did exactly as they were told.

C. Even though Jesus was seeking solitude, his compassion for the people was such that he could not turn them away. Indeed, he “welcomed” them.

D. Luke repeatedly shows us a Savior who can’t say no to those in need. His compassion overwhelms his decision making. He is deeply touched by the needs that surround him, and these always take priority.

E. What does this tell us about how we are to live our lives?

F. What does this tell us about how God responds to us? When we have needs? When we misunderstand his will but try to do right in faith?

#### **IV. Feeding the 5,000**

(Luke 9:12-17) Late in the afternoon the Twelve came to him and said, "Send the crowd away so they can go to the surrounding villages and countryside and find food and lodging, because we are in a remote place here."

*13* He replied, "You give them something to eat."

They answered, "We have only five loaves of bread and two fish-- unless we go and buy food for all this crowd." *14* (About five thousand men were there.)

But he said to his disciples, "Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each."

*15* The disciples did so, and everybody sat down. *16* Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke them. Then he gave them to the disciples to set before the people. *17* They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

A. This is first time Luke gives a count of the crowd.

B. By 1<sup>st</sup> Century standards, this is a huge crowd. Very few towns were this big.

C. First Century Palestine wasn’t designed to accommodate these kinds of crowds, especially in a very small town such as Bethsaida. There were very few inns, and nothing adequate for this crowd.

D. Today, people can work for less than an hour and buy a meal, in the US. But the common people had to spend all day earning the next day's meal. Feeding people was more than a courtesy—it was essential to life—and so this is also a metaphor for Jesus' concern for the ordinary things of life. He sees our physical needs as well as our spiritual needs.

E. Why all the leftovers? First, because these people could not afford to throw away food, as we do. Food was a precious commodity. Second, the leftovers show the bounty of God—he is not stingy with his grace, but gives abundantly. The people had all they could eat.

F. This is one of only three events recorded in all 4 gospels. The others are the baptism of Jesus and his death, burial, and resurrection.

G. Why is this simple story so important in the minds of the gospel writers?

H. Not all the listeners were believers. In fact, John 6:14 says the crowd considered him a prophet, rather than the Messiah. And yet Jesus fed them—not to reward their faith or to buy their loyalty—but because they were hungry.

I. We really have to get over the idea that we should use food or medical care as a means of inducing people to come to class or get baptized. Rather, we show a *generous* love and people will be attracted to the One who taught us to love.

## V. The Great Confession

(Luke 9:18-21) Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say I am?"  
19 They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life."

20 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

Peter answered, "The Christ of God."

21 Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone.

A. "Christ" is a transliteration of *Christos*, Greek for "anointed one." It's the exact equivalent of the Hebrew "Messiah." Both mean the king promised by the prophets.

B. Actually, the Hebrew is *Mashiach* or *mashiyach*, but the Greeks had no letter for "sh" and ended nouns with an "s" —hence, the Greek is *messias* (not sure where the "e" comes from, but Hebrew has no vowels, so these things happen). We keep the soft "s" and try to reproduce the "ch" with a soft "h" because the "ch" is Hebrew sounds like clearing your throat. And then make the "i" long just because it sounds better.

C. Given that Herod was after Jesus, and it wasn't yet time to be crucified, it's obvious why Jesus wasn't ready to make the claim public. Herod would have certainly understand the claim to be a threat to his throne.

D. Notice that Jesus' Messiahship was so unexpected that even John the Baptist was confused. He was nearly killed in Nazareth when he taught that the gospel was for the Gentiles, too. This was a very hard lesson for an oppressed and occupied people to accept. They didn't want a spiritual Messiah—they wanted political freedom. Jesus' answer to political problems and a Godless government was to ask for faith and self-sacrifice.

E. This is one of the climatic passages of the gospel. It shows the apostles coming to faith and portends the nature of the salvation Jesus was to bring. Here's the simple declaration of faith on which our salvation depends.

## **VI. Jesus prophesies his crucifixion**

(Luke 9:22-27) And he said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."

23 Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. 24 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. 25 What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self? 26 If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. 27 I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God."

A. Jesus prophesies his crucifixion (making it clear it was part of the plan, not an accident).

B. But the point was to explain what it means to follow Jesus.

C. Then he predicts that Judas would die before Pentecost (without so saying).

D. Verse 23 is one of the most mis-used verses in the Bible (which says a lot). What does it mean to "take up [your] cross"?

1. When we say "we all have crosses to carry," we typically mean a burden where you have no choice—a chronic illness, a difficult sibling or parent, or such.

2. But “take up” is active. Volitional. And Luke makes clear that Jesus was comparing to his own cross—which he picked up voluntarily. It was necessary to achieve his ends, but he could have refused.
3. What is a cross?
4. Well, it’s where you die.
5. To take up your cross is to voluntarily submit to death.
6. What is death?
7. Death is death to self, death to the world, death to sin. It’s **choosing** to lose your life— “24 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it.”
8. This means a lot. It means that Christians don’t get to have the pleasures of life enjoyed by others—not just that we can’t enjoy the vices—but that we spend our time in service to Jesus, not in self-gratification.
9. We aren’t like everybody else. If a choice of school, choice of friends, choice of career, choice of hobby, choice of how we use our free time interferes with God’s mission within us, we pick up our cross, crucify ourselves, and do what God asks.

E. THIS IS PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT LESSON IN LUKE. Don’t soft-peddle it. Rather, ask for examples and testimonies. Jesus says “daily” — what daily choices is he talking about?

F. “Deny” yourself doesn’t call us to asceticism, as though our misery pleases God (exactly the opposite the truth). Rather, we are called to a higher, better form of living. We give up ourselves to live an abundant life! It’s like a metamorphosis. You can’t be a butterfly until you surrender your caterpillar life (it’s corny, but you get the point). But giving up the old life means giving up conventional wisdom and even losing some friends and comforts.

G. When Jesus asked the apostles to go without food and money, he still meant for them to be provided for—just not the ordinary way. Just so, we have to learn to enjoy life and the world God made for us in a different way.

H. Per C. S. Lewis (as quoted by Josh Hunt) (my emphasis)—

The New Testament has lots to say about self-denial, but not about self-denial as an end in itself. We are told to deny ourselves and to take up our crosses in order that we may follow Christ; and nearly every description of what we shall ultimately find if we do so contains an appeal to desire. If there lurks in most modern minds the notion that to desire our

own good and earnestly to hope for the enjoyment of it is a bad thing, I submit that this notion has crept in from Kant and the Stoics and is no part of the Christian faith. Indeed, if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. **We are far too easily pleased.** (C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965], pp. 1-2.)

I. You see, Jesus is not just discussing our final salvation. He's also talking about gaining a new life here and now. Eternal life starts in the Kingdom on earth.

J. Apply it what's going on at church. How does this lesson apply to—

1. Small groups
2. Alberta/Graceland
3. Doing church work in general

K. What excuses for not being involved are good ones? (there are some, but not many)

1. Bad excuses
  - a) I did that when I was younger. Now it's someone else's turn
  - b) I'm retired
  - c) It's my kids—I need a break
  - d) It's not my kids—their parents should handle it
  - e) I pay my taxes for the poor. That's enough.
  - f) I don't have any experience in that
  - g) I don't feel called
  - h) Nobody asked me
  - i) I'm too busy with my kids (kids are important, but how can you raise kids right if you don't let them see you serve Jesus?)
  - j) You're doing that in an unscriptural way (then you do it in a way you consider scriptural.)

k) That's how the denominations do it (and they walk in the building through the door. Must we use the windows?)

l) It's not a Church of Christ ministry (but we are to give glory to GOD, not the church, much less a denomination or a movement)

2. Good excuses

a) They do exist. Work through this with the class.

L. Compare this call with tokenism.

1. Tokenism is doing something but not fully committing to Jesus. Is it enough to attend church and class? What about church, class, and Ladies Bible Class?

2. What would tell us that we're actually doing what Jesus calls us to?

3. Is church attendance taking up our cross?

M. I'll offer some answers I'd like to hear—

1. When we *prefer* a worship service that encourages others, especially new Christians and seekers, rather than a style that we like, then we've hung our taste on a cross.

2. When we choose to use our vacation time to do missions or travel on a teen trip, then we've hung our free time on the cross.

3. When we accept a lower standard of living in order to give more, then we've hung our lifestyle on the cross.

4. When we choose to be sexually pure, then we've hung our sexuality on the cross.

5. When we give up our free time and relaxation to serve perfect strangers at Graceland or in small group service projects, then we've hung our "me" time on the cross.

6. When we invite people who need friends to our home, rather than just our friends, then we've hung our social life on the cross.

7. See if you can extend the list to 20.

N. Jesus makes clear that his mission is of ultimate importance—

What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self? 26 If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the

Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels

O. There will be consequences for getting this wrong.

P. What does it mean to be “ashamed” of Jesus and his words?

1. This is first about standing for Jesus in times of persecution
2. But it’s also being willing to be identified as a Christian at any time and any place—even when embarrassing or inconvenient.
3. We’ll be judged based on how we honor Jesus when our reputation or our career or our next commission is on the line.

Q. Confessing Jesus is great—but worthless unless we take up our crosses and stand for Jesus when there’s a high price to be paid for doing so.

## **VII. The Transfiguration**

(Luke 9:28-36) About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. <sup>29</sup> As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.

<sup>30</sup> Two men, Moses and Elijah, <sup>31</sup> appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. <sup>32</sup> Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him.

<sup>33</sup> As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters--one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what he was saying.) <sup>34</sup> While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud.

<sup>35</sup> A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him."

<sup>36</sup> When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves, and told no one at that time what they had seen.

A. Luke continues to show the magnificence of Jesus. We’ve seen his baptism, his control of nature, and his ability to heal at a distance. We seen his power over disease, demons, and even death. Finally, we have the apostles confessing that Jesus is the Son of God.

B. The very next event is God’s own miraculous demonstration of Jesus’ divinity.

C. In v. 28 we see that Jesus was closest to Peter, James, and John. Those who study group dynamics use this as an appropriate example of the fact that we all need a few close friends. There’s a level of intimacy that cannot be developed in groups even as small as 12. This is no insult to the other 9, just a fact regarding how people relate to one another.

D. Luke gives the humble detail that, although Jesus went on the mountain to pray, the disciples slept (they weren’t just sleepy). They were evidently awakened by the light.

E. The bright light is a reference to the glory, that is, the Shechinah<sup>1</sup> (Hebrew for glory) that surrounds God. Going back to Exodus, the OT has a well-developed teaching that God’s presence radiates a blindingly bright light, called his “glory.” Hence, “glory” generally refers to the immediate presence of God, not just honor. Hence, v. 31 speaks literally of “glory” rather than “glorious splendor,” as mistranslated by the NIV. To appear “in glory” is to appear surrounded by the presence of God himself—as though God had pierced a hole from heaven into space-time to allow his glory to shine onto Jesus.

F. In Luke 2:9, the angels who announced the Savior’s coming—“the glory of the Lord shone around them.”

G. The implication is that Jesus is appropriately in God’s immediate presence. This is where he belongs and this is what he left.

H. Jesus had just said,

(Luke 9:26) If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his **glory** and in the **glory** of the Father and of the holy angels.

I. The Transfiguration thus proves the words of the Jesus that he will come “in glory”—meaning from the presence of God—proving that he will return to glory and so that he will be able to return from glory. It demonstrates the truth of the promise in the most vivid way possible.

J. It has often been noted by commentators that Moses was the great lawgiver and Elijah the greatest of the prophets. And the passage shows the superiority of Jesus to each.

K. In v. 31, we all told the Jesus was discussing his “departure” with Moses and Elijah. The Greek word is *exodus*, which can be a euphemism for death, or can refer

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<sup>1</sup> If you want to pronounce it right, the “ch” is like the German “ch.” Most Americans just replace it with a “k.”

simply to leaving, or can refer to the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt out of slavery. Of course, Jesus' death is the primary reference, but the use of *exodus* in a conversation with Moses has to have a special significance! Jesus is clearly portrayed as the new and greater Moses. In fact, we see the point of Moses is not so much as lawgiver, as is the conventional explanation, but as the man who gave freedom to slaves. Jesus is the greater Moses, not as lawgiver, but as giver of freedom.

L. We aren't told how the apostles came to realize who these men were, but there was a conversation between them and Jesus about his death. Certainly, the events of the Gospels were of great importance to those in heaven as well as those on earth. God may have revealed their identities directly to their hearts. Who knows?

M. "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him." This seems to repudiate Peter's desire to honor Moses and Elijah. It's not so much that it would be wrong to honor them, but that their time was past and supplanted by Jesus. In other words, God is pointing out the superiority of Jesus to even these great men, great men who were anxious for the work of Jesus to be completed.

N. It's noteworthy that the apostles were required to confess faith before seeing the glory of Jesus. This happened in response to faith but surely created a much deeper, stronger faith. This is the nature of Christianity—faith lived builds on and matures the simple faith we begin with as we give God opportunity to show his glory by having first believed.

O. Some commentators suppose that the change in Jesus' appearance was his divine nature shining through, rather than God shining on Jesus. They are not mutually exclusive possibilities. V. 32 makes clear that the apostles also saw *Jesus'* glory—meaning that he has glory in his own right, demonstrating that he is co-equal with God.

P. There is a certain irony in presenting the fullness of Jesus' glory in a conversation about the cross. We will soon see how Jesus teaches leaders to be servants. Glory comes from submission.

### **VIII. The disciples fail to heal a demoniac**

(Luke 9:37-42) The next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met him. 38 A man in the crowd called out, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. 39 A spirit seizes him and he suddenly screams; it throws him into convulsions so that he foams at the mouth. It scarcely ever leaves him and is destroying him. 40 I begged your disciples to drive it out, but they could not."

41 "O unbelieving and perverse generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you and put up with you? Bring your son here." 42 Even while the boy was coming, the demon threw him to the ground in a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the evil spirit, healed the boy and gave him back to his father.

A. Apparently the power to drive out demons Jesus had earlier given the disciples was still with them.

B. Matthew and Mark report that it was the 9 apostles left behind who couldn't cast out the demon.

C. Jesus' rebuke was to the disciples for the lack of faith! How could their faith be weak at this point?

D. Just in case someone asks, in Matthew's parallel passage, the KJV reports, (Mat 17:21) "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." But this is a textual corruption. The verse was not in the original text. It was added by a copyist.

E. However, in Mark's parallel, Jesus says, (Mark 9:29) "This kind can come out only by prayer."

F. We thus have two explanations for their failure: a lack of faith and a lack of prayer. The two go together. Why?

G. "Perverse" is literally "turned away," in the sense of going the wrong way.

## **IX. Jesus predicts his death**

(Luke 9:44-45) "Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men." 45 But they did not understand what this meant. It was hidden from them, so that they did not grasp it, and they were afraid to ask him about it.

A. You'd think after the Transfiguration the apostles would be able to grasp this, but they could not. Betrayal would certainly seem inconceivable, as would capital punishment for a man such as Jesus.

B. "Hidden from them" can't mean the God wouldn't let them believe, as this would mean that Jesus and God were at cross purposes. It could mean that Satan still had influence enough with the apostles to prevent their understanding.

C. The apostles fear to ask is also a clue. They were afraid of knowing the truth. The thought of Jesus' death was unbearable. They were in denial.

## **X. Leadership**

(Luke 9:46-48) An argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest. 47 Jesus, knowing their thoughts, took a little child and had him stand beside him. 48 Then he said to them, "Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. For he who is least among you all--he is the greatest."

A. Three of the apostles had just been on the mountaintop with Jesus. Nine others had failed to cast out a demon and had been rebuked by Jesus. It's easy to imagine some feelings of jealousy being aroused.

B. The Gospels are ruthlessly honest about the human failings of the apostles. They are not at all romanticized. We see them vividly portrayed as subject to the failings common to us all—a powerful lesson in grace in itself. God isn't looking for super-heroes, just schmucks like us who have to muddle through the best we can. Perseverance despite our weaknesses is a key attribute of leadership.

C. Jesus doesn't tell his disciples to be *like* a child. Rather, he says they should *welcome* (KJV: receive) a child, as this humble service is the same as welcoming Jesus. The parallels to the Judgment Day scene in Matthew 25 should be unmistakable. Doing good to those who are vulnerable or marginalized is doing good to Jesus.

D. Call this the “Gospel of the Nursery Worker”—the man or woman who cares for children out of love for Jesus is caring for Jesus himself. She'd (it's nearly always a woman) rather be at the service or in the class or part of the worship—but her heart *for* service overcomes her desire to *receive* service. And Jesus says this is the heart of the *greatest* in the Kingdom of Heaven. I see no reason to take this as exaggeration.

E. No one has a clue who kept the children while Paul or Augustine or Luther or Campbell preached. Their names aren't recorded in history. But their names are recorded in heaven—at the top of the list.

F. Today, as in the First Century, the care of children is often considered a nuisance—a burden. “Do we HAVE to have childcare at this event?”

G. And in the First Century, child care was largely woman's work (as it is today, but more so), making society's appreciation of care for children that much less. It was a man's world.

H. So it boils down to this, in modern terms:

*Disciple:* Jesus, how can I tell who is the greatest in the church?

*Jesus:* Look for the one changing diapers.

I. This account also suggests that the disciples still had an earthly kingdom in mind for Jesus.

## **XI. Whoever is not against you ...**

(Luke 9:49-50) "Master," said John, "we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we tried to stop him, because he is not one of us."

50 "Do not stop him," Jesus said, "for whoever is not against you is for you."

- A. This is a hard one.
- B. Notice that the disciples had just failed to cast out a demon and had been badly embarrassed. It's easy to see how they'd resent this "outsider" being successful when they'd failed. In fact, we often ascribe bad motives to those who succeed where we fail.
- C. Rather than celebrating the fact that people were being rescued from demon possession, the disciples were jealous and wanted him to stop! If we can't cast out demons, nobody can! It was very petty—and very much like us.
- D. When a another church grows more than we do, aren't we quick to blame them for having an entertainment mindset or failing to preach the full gospel—or *something*? Aren't we capable of similar jealousy and pettiness?
- E. The exorcist was doing no immediate harm to the cause of Christ. In fact, he was likely helping, as he was successful in what he was attempting. God must be blessing him as not just anyone can do an exorcism.
- F. The man was opposed to demons, and the enemy of my enemy is my friend, as the saying goes. More importantly, Jesus was not about pride. He was about *love*. If the man was helping people, who was Jesus to get in the way?
- G. While it's hard to build a theology on just this passage, this does tell us a lot about how we should respond to those whose teaching seems to us less pure than our own. If they are hurting people, certainly love compels us to help those being hurt. If they are helping, perhaps we have more important work than to denounce them. It bears some thought.

## **XII. Jesus rejected**

(Luke 9:51-56) As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. 52 And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; 53 but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem.

54 When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?" 55 But Jesus turned and rebuked them, 56 and they went to another village.

- A. We now turn to a critical turning point in the Gospel. Jesus is heading toward Jerusalem. Luke is intentionally foreboding.

B. Wright points out how rare travel was in those days for most common folk. Travel was by foot for the poor. Inns were rare and unpleasant places. Travelers depended on the hospitality of strangers, which sometimes wasn't provided. They surely spent many nights asleep on the ground.

C. Jesus took a shortcut through Samaria, which most Jews refused to do out of bigotry. But it wasn't just bigotry. Josephus records how some Jewish pilgrims had been murdered on their way to Jerusalem through Samaria.

D. We see that the bigotry ran in both directions. The Samaritans insisted on worshipping on Mt. Gerizim, rather than Jerusalem, and so refused to accommodate Jesus in going to Jerusalem, which to them was false worship.

E. We see how bigotry reinforces bigotry, hatred builds on hatred.

F. James and John, who were among the three closest to Jesus, wanted to kill them (and evidently they had power to do so!) Jesus would have none of it. Jesus called them "sons of thunder" in Mark 3:17 for a reason!

G. It's interesting to compare the John of the gospels with the John who writes 1 John. God's Spirit obviously radically transformed him through his encounter with Jesus.

H. Abraham Lincoln: "Do I not destroy my enemies when I make them my friends?" We later see in Acts (also by Luke) where many Samaritans were converted. You can't convert dead people.

I. Notice that Jesus teaches tolerance both for those who followed him without really knowing him and those who rejected him out of bigotry. It would be particularly the Pharisees that Jesus attacks. We'll need to consider why he challenges them.

### **XIII. The cost of discipleship**

(Luke 9:57-62) As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go."

58 Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

59 He said to another man, "Follow me." But the man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."

60 Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

61 Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family." 62 Jesus replied, "No one who puts

his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

A. Luke never lets us get comfortable. Just as we were feeling superior in comparison to the apostles, we are reminded that the apostles actually honored these incredibly strict commands. They may have had tempers and weak faith, but they left everything when they were asked to do so.

B. When Jesus says he has no place to lay his head, he speaks the literal truth. The Samaritans had just refused to house them and so they were likely sleeping on the ground as they traveled.

C. The duty to bury your father was considered by the Jews as the most binding, greatest obligation of a son. Burial of a father was more important and urgent than reading the Law, celebrating the Passover, or even circumcising a child! Jesus says that following Jesus is even more important.

D. "Let the dead bury the dead" means to let the spiritually dead do the burying. There are others who will handle the task who won't have to give up precious time with Jesus.

E. But Jesus wasn't going to be in town for long or, for that matter, on earth for long. Now means now. These were extraordinary times and demanded the greatest of urgency.

F. It's worth noting that burial customs are not Christian in origin. There is nothing in the Bible tying funerals to the church.

G. They are for the family, not the deceased, as the deceased has already gone to his reward. Funerals were attached to the church because the church is best able to comfort the survivors—but only because of Jesus.

H. We aren't to take Jesus too literally. He doesn't want us to be discourteous or unfeeling to the needs of others. Love *does* dictate that the bereaved be comforted. We've earlier seen where Jesus was touched by the effect of death on those left behind. He'll later weep over Lazarus.

I. But neither should we soften the point. Jesus is more important than anything—even family obligations. And many people have paid that price—and many more have chosen not to.