

LUKE

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Luke chapter 9 as we continue our study through the Word of God. This chapter is kind of a bridge leading to Jesus' final journey to Jerusalem, which begins in verse 51 of Luke chapter 9. But this chapter is packed with information as we will see this evening.

Luke starts off with the commission by Jesus of the twelve disciples. Then we see Jesus feed the five thousand. We see the confession of faith by Peter and Jesus telling His men that He is going to die and rise from the dead. We see the call to discipleship and what that is all about as well as the Transfiguration. We also see Jesus cast out demons from a father's only son. And He will speak of His coming death once again. We will see Jesus instruct His men on what true greatness is all about. And, as I have said, Jesus setting His face towards Jerusalem to complete the work the Father sent Him to do, to pay in full the penalty for our sins! And the chapter will end with Jesus speaking once again about discipleship and this time the cost of being a disciple of His!

So we have a lot of ground to cover and let's jump into our study this evening, beginning in Luke chapter 9, starting in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

LUKE 9**VERSES 1-2**

We are now entering the final 6 months of Jesus' ministry and His final sweep through the Galilee region. But before He goes into these areas He sends His 12 men to prepare the people for Him.

This is interesting to me. When John the Baptist started his ministry, he was saying, **“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!”** Matthew 3:2. When Jesus began His ministry He was saying, **“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.”** Mark 1:15.

And Jesus now sends out His men with the same message, why? It is as Jesus said in John 20:21, **“...As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.”** You see, they were to go out with the Gospel message to have the people turn from their sin to the Savior!

Today people are afraid of speaking of sin, of repentance, we have seeker friendly churches that encourage people to feel good about living in sin. And yet, without sin there is no need for a Savior and without repentance there is no turning from sin. The message is still the same and we need to proclaim it loud and strong, in love.

Not only were they preaching about the kingdom of God but they also healed those who were sick which not only authenticated their ministry but also gave the people a glimpse of what the Kingdom Age will be like.

In Isaiah chapter 35 we see this beginning in verse 5 where we read, **“Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert. The parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water; in the habitation of jackals, where each lay, there shall be grass with reeds and rushes. A highway shall be there, and a road, and it shall be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for others. Whoever walks the road, although a fool, shall not go astray. No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast go up on it; it shall not be found there. But the redeemed shall walk there, And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”** Isaiah 35:5-10.

That day is coming where the Lord will rule and reign on this earth with righteousness filling the land. That was their message and it should be our message, repent for the kingdom is coming or to put it this way, ***PREPARE FOR THE KING FOR THE KING IS COMING!***

Before we move on let me share this story with you and then I will expound on it. We are told,

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 stricken buddy, "I have watched doctors do this operation. I think I can do it. 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.

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.

- R. Kent Hughes, Luke Volume One, p. 321

That is an amazing story and yet, look at these twelve men and the work they did to bring the Gospel message to people. It is even more amazing. They were unskilled men and yet, the world was turned upside down by the work that they did.

How did they accomplish such amazing things? The empowerment of the Holy Spirit upon their lives and folks, we can do the same. Not because we are so great but God desires to use people like you and me to do His work. We just need to go forward!

It is as Jesus said in Acts 1:8, **“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”**

And as you read through the book of Acts you see this power coming upon believers as they speak boldly the words of God! We see this in Acts chapter 4 for example, as believers were being persecuted for their faith in Jerusalem and we are told beginning in verse 29, **“Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.’ And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.”** Acts 4:29-31.

Notice what the empowering of the Holy Spirit did upon their lives – **“they spoke the word of God with boldness.”** Not acting weird, barking like dogs or whatever, but speaking forth the Word of God with boldness. Lord, empower us for the work!

VERSES 3-6

Look at how Jesus sends them out, with nothing basically. I don’t know about you, but when our kids were young, we traveled with the car packed with things. I remember one time we had so much stuff to bring with us that the kids had to sit on some of the stuff.

But not here and you may be wondering why? I think the reason is simple. Jesus wanted them to learn to depend upon the Lord to meet their needs. These were faith lessons for these men and they obeyed the words of Jesus and spoke forth the Gospel message. And the Lord did provide for them not only with their needs to live by but with power to bring forth the Gospel message!

I think it is easy to read through these stories and not think much about them and then, when it comes to applying these things to our life we don't! Yes, we hear the Word of God but we don't apply the Word of God to our lives. Obviously, that is wrong. It is not only hearing but doing! Someone once said that experience is the best teacher if you could afford the lessons!

Also, we see Jesus already warning them that some will not receive them and thus, will not receive the message. And when they are rejected they are to get in the face of those who are rejecting them and just let them have it, right? Wrong!

If the people rejected their message they were to shake the dust from their feet and move on. The basic thought is you can't force people to believe and this gesture illustrated that they were not taking anything of theirs with them because they rejected the message. They were just to move on! That is a great lesson for us to learn. Too often we will argue and fight and in the end, we lose our witness by our actions. Be careful.

VERSES 7-9

Herod Antipas was Tetrarch in the area of Galilee and Perea and because of a guilty conscious, he had John the Baptist beheaded, he heard rumors that John had risen from the dead and it concerned him.

Of course, that was not true, but when Jesus was doing all those miracles, there was confusion about who He was. Later on, as Jesus is on trial, Herod was so intrigued by this that he wanted to meet Jesus, be entertained by Him, but Jesus did not allow that to happen.

Jesus did not come to entertain us but to transform us! In fact, the only encounter he had with Jesus is when Pilate sends Jesus to Herod during His trial before His crucifixion. And Jesus was silent before Him, because, like I said, Herod wanted to be entertained by Jesus and that was not going to happen. Too often today people are like Herod, they look to be entertained by Jesus. And, as I said, that is not the reason He came!

Let me also say this. There is much confusion here about Jesus, who He is. Some thought He was John the Baptist who came back from the dead, others saw Him as Elijah and still others thought it was one of the prophets who came back from the dead!

Let me ask you this. What is the solution to this dilemma about who Jesus is? Bring this question into the light of God's Word and it will show you who Jesus is! We saw this with John the Baptist when he was in prison and was wondering if Jesus is the One or if they should look for another. So John sends his disciples to Jesus to ask Him.

And listen to what Jesus did and then what He told the disciples of John back in Luke 7:21-22, "**And that very hour He cured many of infirmities, afflictions, and evil spirits; and to many blind He gave sight. Jesus answered and said to them, 'Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them.'**"

In other words, Jesus showed the disciples of John that He is the fulfillment of what the Old Testament prophets said about the Messiah, Jesus is the One! And if you are ever confused about Jesus, just go to the Word of God and let the Spirit of God show you our wonderful Savior!

VERSES 10-11

Notice the change here with these men. When they left Jesus in Luke 9:1, they were called *disciples* – that is, “learners.” When they came back after their preaching mission, they were called *apostles* – that is, “those sent with authority and a message.” They certainly remained disciples, but knew both the message and the authority in a much better way after their work.

And as the boys returned from their mission they are excited in what God had done and they are telling Jesus all that took place. Jesus then wants to take them aside for a time of refreshing after the work. But, as we can see, there are people who are in need and thus, as we read, the needs of the people are more important and as we serve, God will refresh us.

So as word got out about Jesus being in the area, that He was in town, people from all around gathered to Him. Why? Because they saw that Jesus alone could meet their needs. Jesus alone could heal their lives and He did. You see, Jesus not only ministered to their physical needs, which was important, but He also ministered to their spiritual needs. He gave them the Gospel, He spoke of the Kingdom of God!

But, as we are going to see, the day is coming to an end, and all these people are still around Jesus. What is going to happen? Let’s read on and see.

VERSES 12-17

Now this is an amazing story that some try to explain away the miracle that took place. So we are going to look at this and see that this was a miracle.

First of all we see that it was getting late and there were some 5,000 men plus women and children, maybe 15,000 to 20,000 people there! And the problem was they had no food. And so the solution that the disciples of Jesus came up with was to send them away, send them home.

But Jesus tells them, “**You give them something to eat.**” And they respond by basically saying that they did not have enough food for them, just five barley crackers and two small fish. And then they say to Jesus, “**. . . unless we go and buy food for all these people.**”

Now I don't know for sure but I think that was a little sarcastic. You see, they did not have the money to buy food for all these people and where in the world would they go to get that food? Can you imagine pulling into MacDonald's and saying, “I need 20,000 Big Macs and fries to go with that. 10,000 Cokes and we better get 10,000 diet Cokes!” Not going to happen and it was not going to happen here either.

So they wanted to send the people away and Jesus's ministry was one of “**Come unto Me**” But let's face it, this was an impossible task from a human perspective!

But let's think about this for a minute. Where did the disciples just come from? They just came back from a ministry trip where they saw the power of God at work through their lives. The sick were healed, the Gospel message went forward.

And now it was time to put what they learned into practice and the sad thing is that they don't do that! Now before we are too harsh on them, what about us? We see the power of God at work in our life and then something happens that is impossible to deal with and what do we want to do? Walk away, give up! No, give it to God and trust in His Word, His promises to us and see what may be impossible for man to accomplish is very possible with God. Remember that there is no problem too big or too small for God, don't push aside what God wants to do, but be open to Him!

So there they are with these five barley crackers and these two small fish, that is all that they had. And John tells us, (John 6:8-9) that these five barley crackers and two fish came from a young man, it was all that he had and he was willing to give all that he had to Jesus!

And Jesus took the barley crackers and fish and He fed all these people! And keep in mind this was not just a snack for them. The word "**filled**" speaks of glutton, they ate till they could eat no more. In fact, they had 12 baskets of left overs when they were done eating!

Now why the 12 baskets here and when Jesus feeds the 4,000 there were 7 baskets? The feeding of the 5,000 were to the Jews and thus, the 12 baskets could represent the 12 tribes of Israel. It is also possible that the 7 baskets of left overs for the feeding of the 4,000, which were Gentiles, could be speaking of the 7 continents! I like that, both Jews and Gentiles are represented!

Now here is where some take away the miracle. They say that when the young lad gave to Jesus everyone there felt bad that they were holding out and they gave what they had. Sounds great until you realize that if everyone had food, then there would have been no need to give. This was a miracle!

VERSES 18-20

Jesus often got alone to pray and what an example He was giving to His men and to us. They see Him praying. Now I don't believe they joined Him in prayer but that they joined Him. G. Campbell Morgan was convinced that the disciples interrupted the prayer of Jesus. He wrote, "A careful study of the Gospel narratives has led to the justifiable conclusion that our Lord never prayed with His disciples. Often He left them when He would pray. When in their company He prayed, it was not in association with them, but in separation . . . His praying was on a different plane."

That is possible. We really don't see the disciples of Jesus ever praying with Him but some of them did accompany Him when He was praying, like in the Garden of Gethsemane.

So after they interrupted Jesus He asks them the first of two questions. The first is, "**Who do the crowds say that I am?**" And they respond by basically saying that the people are looking for a political leader to come and establish the Kingdom of God, like John the Baptist, or Elijah, or a prophet like Moses! The crowds were missing the message about the Messiah and in a few verses, Jesus will explain His mission.

That was the first question that spring boards us into the next question that is found in verse 20, "**But who do you say that I am?**" Here's the thing, it really doesn't matter what others think of Jesus, the most important issue is "*Who is Jesus to you?*"

Many today say He was a good teacher, a good person, a moral man, and yet, if you listen to the things that He said, that He is God and the only way to heaven is through Him, and you can't accept that, don't believe it, that would make Him a liar and not a good person but an evil person.

But He is God and Peter picked up on that as God the Father showed him or revealed that truth to him. The crowds looked for a Messiah from their own desire, a political man, while God's plan was a Messiah to free man from the bondage of sin.

VERSES 21-22

This is interesting. Why would Jesus want His men to keep silent about who He is? Keep in mind that the Jews were looking for a Messiah to free them from Roman bondage and Jesus did not want them to get further into this false concept of the Messiah in His First Coming.

In His First Coming He came as the Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world and when He comes again He will set up His Kingdom! And there was a day that He would ride into Jerusalem as Messiah the King, we call in Palm Sunday but it is the exact day that Daniel tells us, 173,880 days from the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Messiah the King would come, and He was ushered in on that exact day only to be crucified a few days later!

The thing we need to understand is that **“the Son of Man must suffer many things . . .”** not ***“might.”*** This was the fulfilment of what the Old Testament prophets spoke of regarding the Messiah and it was a plan of God before the foundations of this world were formed! We see this spoken of in I Peter 1:20 where Peter tells us, **“He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.”** Also, in Revelation 13:8 we see this also spoken of, **“All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”**

Not only must He be slain but He must also be raised the third day and that is exactly what took place! But again, even His disciples were thinking Kingdom Age for they are going to argue who is going to sit on His right side and who will sit on His left side in the Kingdom! Who is going to be the greatest in the Kingdom!

VERSES 23-27

Here is something that many Christians are unaware of or just don't care, but there truly is a cost of discipleship, you need to count the cost of following Jesus.

First Jesus says that we are to deny the self-life. It is as Paul said in Galatians 2:20, **“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”**

Also, in Colossians 3:3-5 we read, **“For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.”**

And finally, in Philippians 3:7 we are told, **“But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.”**

Secondly, we are to take up our cross daily, surrendering totally to God's will and not our own will. The cross spoke of death, the death of the old life and living for Christ! You see, going to the cross was not a round trip, it was one way and that journey is towards Christ and His will, not ours!

And lastly, we are to follow Him, follow His example, be obedient to His Word, let the self-life melt away, let the flesh decrease so that He may increase in our lives! There is no turning back for what does the world have for you? Absolutely nothing compared to what God has for you!

And Jesus sums it up by saying that if you try to save the old life, you will lose. But, when you put to death the old life and are born again in Christ, you win! Too often people will sell their souls for nothing, wine, women and song you might say.

But, if it were possible to gain this entire world you still would lose apart from Christ. It is as Paul said in Romans 14:17-18, **“for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men.”**

Let me share this with you,

One hundred and eighty years after the death of Charlemagne, in about the year 1000, officials of the Emperor Otho opened the great king’s tomb, where they found an amazing sight apart from the treasures. What they saw was this: the skeletal remains of the king seated on a throne, the crown still upon his skull, a copy of the Gospels lying in his lap with his bony finger resting on this text: “What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?”

- R. Kent Hughes, Luke Volume one, p. 342

That is something that each one of us must decide for ourselves, but for me, I have decided to follow Jesus and there is no turning back! How about you?

Now verse 27 is interesting as Jesus says, **“But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God.”**

In reading that some get confused and they will argue that this never happened because they all died before the Kingdom of God was established. The reason they say that is because they just stop there and they don't read on.

You see, they will see a glimpse of the kingdom of God as they see Jesus in glory before them, and as we read on you will see what I mean.

VERSES 28-31

Luke tells us that the events of the Transfiguration took place “**about eight days after these sayings**” and Mark tells us six days. How can that be? The answer can really be very simple if you think about it. You see, Luke could be including the day of Jesus' teaching and the day of the transfiguration while Mark is not, which would give you those 2 missing days.

Remember that Luke tells us it was “**about eight days . . .**”

Now this high mountain that Jesus took Peter, James and John to was probably Mount Hermon, which is in the area of Caesarea Philippi. Mount Hermon rises up some 9,230 feet. Now I don't believe that they went to the top of the mountain but Jesus brought them “**up on a high mountain by themselves.**” (Mark 9:2)

And what was confusing back in verse 27 about some who were standing with Jesus that day and they would not see death until they saw the Kingdom of God, we see that Peter, James and John witness a picture of Jesus in all of His glory, like He will be in the Kingdom Age, before they died, only some eight days later from the events in verse 27!

While they were up there we are told that Jesus was “**transfigured**” before them. (Mark 9:2) The Greek word is METAMORPHOO, (met-am-or-fo’-o) and it speaks of “change in form” or “to change appearance from within.” We get our English word metamorphosis from this Greek word. Think of a caterpillar changing into a butterfly, that is the idea with this word.

Thus, what was veiled in His flesh is now revealed, they saw Jesus in glory! This was not just some costume or disguise Jesus was wearing, He was changed, He was **TRANSFIGURED!**

As one writer put it, “For a brief moment that veil of his humanity was lifted, and his true essence was allowed to shine through. The glory which was always in the depths of his being rose to the surface for that one time in his earthly life. Or put another way, he slipped back into eternity, to his pre-human glory. It was a glance back and a look forward into his future glory!” (R. Kent Hughes, Mark Volume 2, p. 15)

Now, also with Jesus was Moses and Elijah, the two heavy-hitters of the Old Testament. Moses represented the Law and Elijah the prophets and they are talking with Jesus about His “departure” or “exodus.” In other words, they are discussing His death and I am sure they were talking about what the purpose of His death was all about, to pay the price for man’s sin so man can be set free and have fellowship with God the Father once again because sin has separated man from God!

VERSES 32-36

After this long climb up Mount Hermon the boys were tired and they fell asleep. And I think they missed some of this conversation that the Lord had with Moses and Elijah. But when they woke up they saw Jesus in all of His glory and Moses and Elijah with Him!

And as these two men were departing Peter, not knowing what to say, spoke anyway and said, “**Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.**”

One of the big problems with what Peter was saying was that he put Jesus on a level playing field with Moses and Elijah, which was a big mistake. Jesus is Almighty God and these two men, Moses and Elijah are not! Also, he was negating the cross, the payment for the penalty for our sins!

So as Peter was speaking we are told that “**a cloud came and overshadowed them.**” In other words, they were **overshadowed** with the cloud of God’s glory called in the Old Testament *the Shekinah*.

And notice that God the Father did not even acknowledge what Peter said. Instead, the Father spoke and said, “**This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!**” And immediately after this we see that Moses and Elijah are gone and all that remains is Jesus!

People will come and go but the one constant in our lives is Jesus because He will never leave us, He will never forsake us. Thus, we need to listen to what He is telling us and obey!

The other thing here is many miss the point. You see, it is all about the cross, the death of Jesus to pay in full the penalty for our sins. If you get caught up with other things you will miss the point. The Father wants us to speak of the cross, of Jesus and His finished work! Don’t negate it or forget it!

Now did this event impact Peter's life? You bet it did for in II Peter 1:16-21 we read, **“For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’ And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”**

You see, Peter saw Jesus in all of His glory, He heard the voice of the Father speak, and as sure as he saw these things, he tells us that we can trust in God's Word even more than what he saw with his eyes! May we understand that. God's Word is truth and we can trust in what God has said more than what we see with our own eyes!

Now, keep in mind that Peter wanted to stay on the mountaintop with Jesus, Moses and Elijah. And it is great to live on the mountain top, but, as we are going to see starting in verse 37, there is a world in need and if you stay on the mountaintop, you would never be able to minister to them. Let's read on and see what is happening down below.

VERSES 37-42

Here we see that it is now the next day and Jesus and the three men who were with Him come down from the mountaintop and look who is waiting for them in this valley you might say! It is the Devil!

But why? One of the reasons is to rob Peter, James and John of the joy and the glory of the experience they had! It will take their focus off of Jesus and place it upon this situation. And what happened to these men can happen to us as we come down from the mountaintop experience with God you might say and we get blasted by the Devil!

You know how it is. You come home from a retreat or something and the kids are running around the house, maybe their heads are spinning around, green vomit spewed everywhere! Okay, maybe not that bad, but you know what I mean.

And all of a sudden, all that joy we experienced is gone because now our attention is on the situation that is before us. What can we do? Keep your eyes focused on Jesus. Draw close to Him. Rest in Him. Don't let the Devil rob you of that joy that God has for you!

The second point and just as important is that there is a world of hurting people out there being destroyed by the Devil, and as Christians, empowered by God, we are to minister to them and free them from this bondage that Satan has placed them in.

This incident here, where this boy is demon possessed, is a severe case. And this boy's father confronts Jesus and asks for help. He tells Jesus that His men could not help his son and he is hoping that Jesus can!

Now these men who were down below saw the violent activity of this demon possessed boy and it may have caused the 9 men who did not go up Mount Hermon with Jesus to take their eyes off of God and place them on the power of Satan which caused them to be impotent in helping this boy.

Also, maybe because they didn't go with Jesus it brought some anger, some hatred in their lives. They were jealous that Peter, James and John got to go but they didn't and Peter, I mean really. "Remember what Jesus said to Peter, 'Get behind be Satan!' and He never said that to us!"

And that destroyed the faith they had, they were paralyzed with fear, which is the opposite of faith. Fear causes you to lose the presence of God in your life. Here we see Jesus rebuke these men for their unbelief.

Now, what was a distraction to these men was not a distraction to Jesus, He stayed focused. If you are fearing what the devil can do to you tonight, his power, listen carefully to what John tells us, "**You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.**" I John 4:4. Don't forget that truth!

And what these men could not do Jesus does. He steps in and sets this boy free, presenting him back to his father, set free from the Devil!

And He rebukes His men for their lack of faith! They had taken their eyes off the One who could help them, Jesus and in their own strength, in their own ability they were unable to do anything. In fact, fear paralyzed them and that is exactly what fear does in the life of a believer. It makes them stationary!

What a powerful lesson for us. We need to look to the One who can help us and not try to do it from our own strength. We must not let things get in our way of looking to the Lord, but rely totally on Him. Those mountains in our lives can be moved if we look to the One who can move them, Jesus!

VERSES 43-45

The people were excited, maybe thinking Kingdom now, and Jesus warns His men to get refocused, to listen to what He was saying, that death is coming for Him. His mission has not changed, the cross was still before Him. He came to set man free from the sins that had man in bondage! Did they get it? Let's read on and see.

VERSES 46-48

I think you can clearly see that they didn't get it for they are arguing who would be the greatest in the Kingdom. They were not arguing who would be first to the cross, or to put it in our vernacular, they were not arguing who would be first to the electric chair!

Remember the great boxer Mohamad Ali. He would say, "***I am the greatest!***" And when you think about it, that is what the apostles were saying about themselves when in reality they should have been saying that "***He is the greatest!***" Jesus is the greatest, we are not! But pride is a horrible monster, don't feed it because it will grow and grow and consume your life!

Spurgeon summed it up like this as he wrote, "He spoke of his abasement, they thought of their own advancement; and that '*at the same time*'." How true!

They were disputing who was the greatest and what does Jesus do? Does He point to Peter saying, ***“Peter is the greatest, he will be the first Pope!”*** No He doesn't. He doesn't say that Peter is the greatest but He takes a child and says that if you want to be great in His Kingdom then you must be like this child, you must have the faith of a child that trusts!

In other words, the path to greatness is humility before God and man, learn to be a servant of all. As I have said before, you can never be too small for God to use you but you can be too big! Be careful!

It is as James tells us, **“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.”**

Or as The Living Bible puts it, **“Then when you realize your worthlessness before the Lord, he will lift you up, encourage and help you.”** I would rather have God lift me up than use a shaky ladder and try to lift myself up to a place I don't belong because I will fall, I will come crashing down and so will you!

VERSES 49-50

This is interesting because we are talking about humility and being great in God's Kingdom and now John steps in with a complaint. You see, John saw others being used by God and it made John angry because they were not card carrying members of the Jesus Apostolic Troop #12 with their little merit badges pinned to their robes.

And when the apostles saw these men casting out demons they told them to stop doing that because they were not part of this group.

May that be a lesson for us that we never get in the way of the work of God because this group of Christians is not part of a Calvary Chapel or whatever. They might not even have the right motives but they are speaking forth the truths of God.

Paul, in Philippians 1:15-18 said, **“Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from good will: The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.”** May that be our heart, that we are not building up our Kingdom, but His!

We also see this attitude in the Old Testament where we read in Numbers 11:25-30, **“Then the LORD came down in the cloud, and spoke to him, and took of the Spirit that was upon him, and placed the same upon the seventy elders; and it happened, when the Spirit rested upon them, that they prophesied, although they never did so again. But two men had remained in the camp: the name of one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad. And the Spirit rested upon them. Now they were among those listed, but who had not gone out to the tabernacle; yet they prophesied in the camp. And a young man ran and told Moses, and said, ‘Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.’ So Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ assistant, one of his choice men, answered and said, ‘Moses my lord, forbid them!’ Then Moses said to him, ‘Are you zealous for my sake? Oh, that all the LORD’S people were prophets and that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!’ And Moses returned to the camp, both he and the elders of Israel.”**

That is the heart to have, that all would be empowered by God for the work of the ministry and not just a few!

VERSES 51-56

We now see Jesus set His face towards Jerusalem knowing what awaits Him there, the cross. He is making His final journey; the cross is only some 6 months away now. He did not let anything distract Him from the work He was to accomplish and what a lesson for us. Don't let things move you off the course that God has for your life!

Here is another point. All that He has instilled in His men, will they apply it to their lives?

Well, we don't have to guess. As they entered a village of the Samaritans these people rejected Jesus. And thus, James and John ask the Lord if they should command fire to come down and destroy these people! I think it is interesting that they had that kind of confidence to destroy people's lives but not enough to set people free!

Keep in mind that the Jews did not have good relations with the Samaritans, and were prejudiced against them as well as the Samaritans looking down upon the Jews. Of this group of people, Pate tells us, "The origin of the Samaritan people seem to have been the intermarrying of Jews from the Northern Kingdom with imported non-Jewish colonists after the conquest of 722 b.c. (2 Kings 17:24). These mixed Jews-Gentiles developed their own translation of the Pentateuch (Samaritan Pentateuch), built their own temple of worship on Mt. Gerazim (see John 4:20), which was later destroyed by John Hyrcanus (128 b.c.), and celebrated their own Passover."

And as we read this we see that James and John, the sons of thunder, had very little love and compassion at this point in their lives. Also, in their zeal to serve the Lord they were willing to destroy lives instead of saving them. Be careful. Show love, mercy, compassion towards people for Paul tells us in Romans 12:19, **“Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord.”**

And Jesus rebukes them telling them they don’t know what spirit they have and at this point it was not the Spirit of God that was guiding them. And this is for all of us as Jesus tells them and us, **“For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them.”** May we never forget that as we are persecuted, put down for our faith.

VERSES 57-62

It is amazing the number of people who want to follow Jesus until they find out the cost, their lives! Are you willing to sacrifice your life in service to follow Jesus? If not, then don’t follow. There is a cost involved!

And Jesus wants those who are following Him to understand that. He said, **“Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.”**

Luke 9:58. Not an easy life but a rewarding life as we serve the Lord, as we follow Him!

Then, in verse 59 and 60 we see Jesus tell another man to follow Him and he tells Jesus, **“Lord, let me first go and bury my father.”** And Jesus tells this man, **“Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God.”**

Now please understand that Jesus is not being harsh or unloving here by not allowing this man to bury his father. First of all, if he buried his father at this point it would be murder for his father wasn't dead yet. This excuse went something like this, "Let me stay until my father dies and then I will follow You!"

Now that could have been another 10 to 20 years or more. His father wasn't even sick! And the point that Jesus is making is this. Following Him is something you do now, you don't put it off until a more convenient time for that time may never come!

Thus, Jesus words are very simple, come now or don't come at all! You see, we can make all kinds of excuses why we are not following Jesus now. "Give me a year or so and then I will serve You!" You see, the question is, "Who are you going to serve?" May we be like Joshua who said, "**. . . But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.**" Joshua 24:15.

You see, you can't serve the Lord looking back, you have to keep your eyes on Jesus. The Greek poet Hesiod said, "You can't plow a straight furrow when looking backward." How true that is.

And really that is the next point that Jesus makes as another person had another excuse. He had people at his house he needed to say goodbye too. Not along delay like the other man but still, another excuse.

And the Lord tells this man, "**No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.**"

In other words, you need to serve the Lord wholeheartedly and not halfheartedly. You see, a farmer would plow his field and keep his rows straight by focusing on an object in the distance, like a tree.

But, if he was distracted, began looking side-to-side and behind him, his rows would not be straight but they would zig zag back and forth all over the place.

The point is this, we need to keep our eyes upon Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith and our life will be on track. If you are being distracted with all kinds of other things than the Lord, looking at the world behind you, you are not fit for the kingdom of God.

Ouch, that hurt! Paul put it this way in II Timothy 4:10, “**for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica . . .**” You see, the reality is, how can you serve God and this world? You can’t!

Remember what we are told of Jesus, “**He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.**” Can you do the same, set your face steadfastly towards Jesus and follow Him? Don’t be distracted by the things the world is throwing at you, keep your eyes focused on Jesus! Press on towards that upward calling!