

A SAVIOR *for* ALL PEOPLE

A Study of Luke's Gospel



LESSON 10

Luke 9:1-50

Information for Teacher

This chapter simply contains too many short stories to cover them all. Rather than sprint through each of them, we'll examine a select few to allow time to focus on and discuss the ones we *do* cover.

Opening Discussion

- *Finish this sentence: "Jesus is _____."*

Introduction

We now come to a hinge point in Luke's gospel. Starting a bit later in 9:51, everything is focused sharply on Jerusalem and the journey there. Jerusalem, where Jesus will be crucified, is the geographical crux of the gospel.

But before Jesus and his disciples set out for Jerusalem, there is one last set of stories and conversations. The disciples must know more about who Jesus is and what it will mean to follow Jesus for the next stages in the journey. Jesus has to prepare them for ministry as well.

The Biblical Text

Luke 9:1-9 (Sending out the Twelve)

- Jesus now has to make **preparations** for his ministry to continue after his death. He is **headed for Jerusalem**, and so this is the calm before the storm.
- Jesus gives his disciples **power** and **authority**
 - To drive out **demons**
 - To cure **diseases**
 - To **proclaim the kingdom** of God
 - To heal the **sick**
- Jesus gives instructions as to what **not to do** and **what not to bring**:
 - Do not bring
 - Bread
 - Money
 - Extra shirt

- Do not
 - Move from house to house in the same town (and thereby insult your host, however inadequate they might be)
 - Stay in a town that does not welcome the messengers
- Jesus is preventing them from **relying on anything other than the power of God** for the support of their mission.
- There is **nothing inherently wrong** with packing food, money, and clothing.
- Jesus also knows that these traveling messengers will need housing, and so he encourages them to **be content** with the situation in which they find themselves.
 - No moving on to better houses in the same town.
- At the same time, Jesus knows that some towns will not be welcoming, and he encourages his disciples to perform a **visible sign of rejection** and leaving: shake dust off feet. (Read Luke’s story in Acts 13:46-52 for an example of this being done.)

- *What is Jesus teaching his apostles here?*
- *How will these lessons be important after Jesus’ death?*
- *What things or ideas are we tempted to rely on other than the power of God?*
- *Taking clothes or food is not always bad. What things do we rely on that aren’t always bad?*
- *In what ways do we “seek better houses” as servants of God?*

Luke 9:10-17 (Feeding the Five Thousand)

- This is perhaps one of the best known of the miracle stories.
- The apostles return from their mission, but we know nothing of what they actually did or how it went.
- Jesus takes the apostles on a **retreat to Bethsaida**, hometown of Peter, Andrew, and Philip, according to John’s gospel.
 - They are not initially planning on any crowd interaction, it seems.
- The **crowd figures this out**, and as often happens, they follow Jesus to find where he is.
- Jesus could have been **irritated** at the interruption and change in plans, but he **welcomes** the crowd, **teaches** them, and **heals** them.
- Evening approaches, and a large crowd would need to **disperse** to go home for food and lodging, since they were in a “remote place.”
- Jesus’ reply to the **disciples’ concern** is brief and to the point: “You give them something to eat” (9:13).
 - The disciples must have looked at each other in a very confused way. There is no way they could get enough food to feed this crowd. There are 5,000 men there (with the final number being double to triple that, including women and children).
- The disciples have only **five loaves** of bread and **two fish** – a grossly inadequate supply.
- Jesus is now going to demonstrate his lordship and his generosity in a grand way.
- He has the crowd sit in groups of fifty.
- He **takes, breaks, thanks, and gives**.
 - This **sequence** is important.
 - Jesus enacts it again in Luke 22:19 at the Last Supper.

- Paul writes of it in 1 Cor. 11:23-24.
 - Jesus is enacting **communion** here in a symbolic way.
 - Communion is an act of **worship**, but also of **generosity** and **hospitality**.
 - See Paul's discussion in 1 Cor. 11:17-34. The Corinthians were not practicing generosity and hospitality at communion, choosing instead to eat all the food before others arrived.
- Everyone eats until fully **satisfied**.
- The **leftovers** are gathered. (It was considered insulting to God to leave food behind in Jewish culture.)
- The **number of leftover baskets** (12) is a significant number in Judaism (12 tribes, 12 OT minor prophets, 12 apostles, to name a few examples).

- *Jesus turns an unwelcome interruption into a good, teaching moment. Tell about a time when you did the same.*
- *Explain how Jesus' act is both theological and practical (hospitable).*
- *Jesus has already taught them. Isn't that the only thing that's important? Why bother with feeding?*

Luke 9:18-27 (Jesus' Identity and Impending Death)

- Jesus is **praying alone** with his disciples. The crowds are, for once, not there.
- Jesus decides it is time to **shoot straight** with his disciples about his identity.
 - Remember, one of the key questions so far has been, "**Who is this man?**"
- Jesus asks them all who the general public, or those who have heard his message, are saying he is.
- As we might expect, the answers are **John the Baptist** or **Elijah**.
- Jesus wants a **specific answer** from the disciples. Others might give one answer, but Jesus is ready to hear what his closest followers will say about him.
- Fittingly, **Peter** answers. He **confesses** that **Jesus is God's Messiah**.
- This is a **KEY MOMENT** in Luke's gospel. For Jesus to continue on to the last part of his life, he has to know that his disciples have made some advancements in their knowledge of him. Peter finally confesses the answer to the question, "Who is this man?" by saying, "God's Messiah."
 - This is not just a **theological** confession. It is a **political** one as well. Peter is admitting that Jesus is king, not Caesar. Jesus is King of the Jews, not Herod. If these kinds of confessions start to spread, Jesus could find himself in political trouble before his time has come. So he warns his disciples not to tell anyone about Peter's confession (9:21).
- Now that the disciples know who Jesus is, Jesus takes a moment to tell them what it will really mean to follow him.
- First, he elaborates on what it means for **him to be God's Messiah**:
 - He will **suffer** many things.
 - He will be **rejected** by the elders, chief priests, and teachers of the law.
 - He will be **killed**, and on the third day, he will be **raised** to life.
- Next, Jesus elaborates on what it means to **follow God's Messiah**:
 - Disciples must **deny** themselves.

- Disciples must **take up their cross** daily.
 - We sometimes refer to illnesses, job losses, troubled children, etc. as “crosses to bear.”
 - While not minimizing life’s troubles, “crosses to bear” are **persecutions** we endure for the sake of following Jesus.
- Disciples must be willing to **lose their lives** (literally!) for Jesus.
 - Why gain the whole world (and stay alive), but lose your soul?
 - Disciples **cannot be ashamed** of Jesus and his words.
- Jesus tells them that some will not “taste death” before they “see the kingdom of God” (9:27).
 - The most common interpretation of this is that some of the disciples will be alive to see the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Some have also pointed to the beginning of the church on the Day of Pentecost (cf. Acts 2).

- *Why is Peter’s confession important?*
- *Today, we might say, “Jesus is Lord, and _____ is not Lord.”*
- *We often talk of modern-day persecution as “non-Christians saying hurtful or unkind things about us.” Is this comparable to the persecution Jesus’ followers were likely to face in the first century?*

Application

- *What are some “missionary journeys” you need to make, even though you might not be equipped for them?*
- *Agree or disagree: “Following Christ is easy.” If you disagree, what are some ways the church has – perhaps unintentionally – sold people a false gospel, claiming that it’s easy to follow Jesus?*
- *Jesus’ act of feeding the 5,000 was a theological act and an act of generous hospitality. What are some things we can do that hit both categories?*
- *Whom do we need to let interrupt us, and how can we become a more “interruptable” people?*
- *What is an example of a cross we might be called to bear? What is an example of a burden but not a cross to bear?*
- *Finish this sentence: following Jesus is hard because _____.*
- *In what ways do we – intentionally or unintentionally – show ourselves to be ashamed of Jesus and his words?*

Next Week’s Text

Luke 9:51-10:24