

Rediscover Jesus

Part 26: Jesus' Twelve Sent Out | Luke 9:1-9

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Personal Introduction

Hi everyone. If you don't know me, my name is Eric and I'm a pastor at HMCC of Jakarta, and it's my privilege to preach the Word of God to us today.

Sermon Series Introduction

We're currently in Part 26 of our sermon series called "Rediscover Jesus," where we're studying the Gospel account of Luke from chapters 4-9, which record Jesus' public ministry in the area of Galilee.

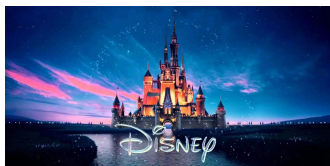
So let's get right into today's sermon: "Jesus' Twelve Sent Out."

Sermon Introduction

What comes to mind when you think of the word "kingdom"?

Maybe you think of a castle. Maybe even the Disney logo.

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Or maybe you think of a sports dynasty where there's a certain individual or team that has dominated their sport or league for an extended length of time.

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Or maybe you think of an ancient kingdom like the Roman Empire that still has massive artifacts standing today that showcase how powerful these kingdoms once were.

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Whatever you think of when you hear the word “kingdom,” we have to remember that a kingdom always has a *king*. In Disney movies, there’s the Sultan in Aladdin, there’s King Triton in The Little Mermaid, there’s Mufasa in the Lion King. In sports, the king is either the collective team that dominates their league like the Golden State Warriors or it’s the certain individual that dominates their sport like Michael Jordan, Muhammad Ali, or Cristiano Ronaldo. In ancient kingdoms, the king is Caesar or Pharaoh or whatever they call their king.

Kingdoms have *kings*. But just as every king falls, every kingdom eventually falls as well. But there is one kingdom that will have no end because the King has no end. This is the greatest kingdom the world has ever known and will ever know. It’s the kingdom of God and it’s ruled by the crucified and risen King Jesus. He is the King who was and is and is to come.

And as believers of Jesus Christ, as citizens in the kingdom of God, it’s *his* kingdom that we proclaim and live for.

The One Thing

***Proclaim the kingdom of God, in the power of the King,
to point to the King.***

Scripture Introduction

Turn your Bibles to Luke 9:1-9.

Just want to give a bit of context before jumping into today’s passage.

As we enter into Luke chapter 9, we enter into a crucial turning point in Jesus’ ministry where it’s no longer *just him* doing everything, but he sends out *his twelve apostles* to do what, so far, only *he* has been doing. Luke chapter 9 is the culmination of Jesus’ ministry in Galilee, where Jesus’ identity and vocation (or what he came to do) will come into sharper focus.¹

So that’s where we are in today’s passage.

Scripture Reading

Let’s read Luke 9:1-9.

¹ And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, ² and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. ³ And he said to them, “Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not have two tunics. ⁴ And whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. ⁵ And wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them.” ⁶ And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.

⁷ Now Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was happening, and he was perplexed, because it was said by some that John had been raised from the dead, ⁸ by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the prophets of old had risen. ⁹ Herod said, “John I beheaded, but who is this about whom I hear such things?” And he sought to see him.

This is God’s Word.

Overview

¹ Mikeal C. Parsons, *Luke*, PCNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2015), 145.

We'll look at this passage in three parts.

- I. Proclaim the kingdom of God (vv. 1-2)
- II. In the power of the King (vv. 3-6)
- III. To point to the King (vv. 7-9)

I. Proclaim the kingdom of God (vv. 1-2)

Verses 1-2 say this:

¹ And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, ² and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.

Jesus first chose his twelve *apostles*, which means “*sent ones*,” back in Luke 6:12-16, but so far, they haven't *really* been “sent” for anything; they've only been companions and observers of *Jesus'* ministry.

But now, three chapters later, after having been with him throughout his public ministry, Jesus finally *sends* them out *as apostles proper* (as “*sent ones*”) for the first time.

Imagine how the Twelve must have responded when they heard this commission from Jesus. So far, they had only witnessed *Jesus* authoritatively preaching the gospel, or “the good news of the kingdom of God” (Luke 4:43), throughout the towns of Galilee. And accompanying *Jesus'* preaching, the Twelve had only witnessed *Jesus* authoritatively cast out demons; heal the sick, leprous, paralyzed, and deformed; forgive sins; calm a storm; and even raise the dead. And now, Jesus was sending *them* to go and do likewise.

What would you be thinking and feeling? Perhaps insecurity, incapacity, and inadequacy. Perhaps you might be thinking, “Who am I that I should go to these towns to do such things? If I go to these towns, what should I say to them? What if they don't believe me? I'm not capable of these things. Oh Jesus, send someone else.”

If that's how you would've responded, then you're in good company because that's exactly how *Moses* responded when God commissioned him to go to Pharaoh to bring his people out of slavery in Egypt (Exod. 3-4). So my guess is that's probably what the apostles were thinking and feeling, even if they didn't outright say all those things as Moses did.

But just like *God* gave Moses powerful signs to accompany his message so that the people would believe, *Jesus* gave his apostles “power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases” so that the people would believe their message.

Now it's important for us to know that what was *central* to *Jesus'* commission to his apostles was *not* the powerful signs of casting out demons and healing the sick, but it was the *message* they were to proclaim.

How do we know that? Because *Jesus himself* said that *preaching* the gospel (or good news) of the kingdom was central to his purpose for coming. After *Jesus* preached in the synagogue in Capernaum, and cast out many demons and healed many who were sick, he withdrew to a desolate place. And when everyone in the town was seeking him to keep him from leaving, this is what *Jesus* says in...

Luke 4:43 = but he said to them, “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose.”

Jesus himself was sent by God the Father for the purpose of preaching the good news of the kingdom of God, and that message was confirmed by powerful accompanying signs, so that the people would believe his message.

And now he was sending *his apostles* for the purpose of preaching the good news of the kingdom of God, and that message would be confirmed by powerful accompanying signs, so that the people would believe their message.

[¹ And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, ² and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.]

Now an important question to ask is this: What is the kingdom of God?

Much can be said about this prominent theme throughout Scripture, but for now, we'll simply understand the kingdom of God as God's *reign* over his people.²

Or to put it another way, there is no kingdom without a *king*, and since this is *God's* kingdom, God *alone* is King over *his* kingdom.

So to proclaim the kingdom of God is to proclaim that *God* must be your King; *he* must rule over your *heart*.

God is not interested in a little obedience here and there. He's not interested in mere adherence to religious rituals. He's not interested in mere behavior modification. No, he wants our *hearts*. He wants us to see and respond to his worthiness as King over all.

But our starting point is not *neutrality* but *hostility* towards God (Rom. 8:7). We naturally love sin more than we love God. We naturally pursue idols rather than the one true God. We are sinners by nature and by choice.

In essence, the sinful heart wants to *be* king rather than enjoying *God* as King. In other words, we most naturally live for the kingdom of *self* rather than the kingdom of *God*. Our heart's cry is most naturally, "My kingdom come, *my* will be done" rather than "Your kingdom come, *your* will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 5:10).

Just take a moment to think about how much you think about *yourself* and how much *you* are the reference point for all of life.

Before making a decision, do you think, "How can this decision help *me*?" instead of "How can this decision help *others*?"

When you get into a conflict with a friend, do you think, "What's wrong with *that* person?" instead of "What wrong with *me*? God, please reveal my sin issues and help me to reconcile with my friend?"

I had a friend in college who wasn't convinced that he was *that* bad of a sinner, so he did a personal experiment. For one day, he tried his best *not* to sin. No sinful thoughts, no sinful desires, no sinful attitudes, no sinful actions. And after that one day, he was *convinced* that he was totally depraved.

The truth is that we're *all* totally depraved, we're *all* sinful by nature and by choice, we *all* most naturally live for the kingdom of *self* rather than the kingdom of *God* because the essence of the sinful heart is to want to *be* king rather than enjoying *God* as King.

And so, that's why, when *John* the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus' ministry, he preached about the kingdom of God, saying: "*Repent*, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2).

And that's why, when *Jesus* began his public ministry, he preached the same message: "*Repent*, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17).

² Graeme Goldsworthy (*Gospel and Kingdom* [Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1982], 47) has defined the kingdom of God as "God's people in God's place under God's rule." He writes, "There is a king who *rules*, a people who are *ruled*, and a sphere where this rule is *recognized* as taking place." I have heard this definition adapted as "God's reign through God's people over God's place" (Jeremy Treat). Greg Gilbert gives the following definition: "The kingdom of God, then, simply defined, is God's redemptive rule, reign, and authority over those redeemed by Jesus" (*What is the Gospel?* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010], 88). He gives the following overview of the kingdom in chapter 6: the kingdom of God is God's redemptive rule over his people; the kingdom of God is here; the kingdom of God is not yet completed, and it will not be completed until King Jesus returns; inclusion in the kingdom of God depends entirely on one's response to the King; to be a citizen of the kingdom is to be called to live the life of the kingdom (85-99).

And now, Jesus was sending his *apostles* to proclaim the same message of the kingdom of God, which is clearer in Mark's parallel account in...

Mark 6:12 = So they went out and proclaimed that people should *repent*.

So why was *repentance* so closely connected to the proclamation of the kingdom of God by John the Baptist, Jesus, and now his apostles? Because the only way that sinners can have God *reign* in their *hearts* is through *repentance*. In order to enter the kingdom of God, we need to repent of our sin and believe in the gospel (Mark 1:15). We need to turn away from idols and turn to serve the living and true God (1 Thess. 1:9).

A heart that will *not* repent—a heart that loves *sin* more than *God*—cannot inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9).

The Bible refers to two kingdoms—and we can only belong to one.

- We either belong to the kingdom of self or the kingdom of God (2 Cor. 5:15)
- We either belong to the domain of darkness or the kingdom of his beloved Son (Col. 1:13).
- We are either children of the devil or children of God (1 John 3:10).
- We are either dead in our sins or made alive in Christ (Eph. 2:1-5).
- We are either headed towards eternal punishment or eternal life (Matt. 25:46).
- We either have an idol as king or God as King over our lives.

So *that's* what the apostles were proclaiming when Jesus sent them to proclaim the kingdom of God—it was a call to *recognize* that we are sinners before God and the only way for us to accept his *reign* over our hearts is through *repentance*.

This was the central message and purpose for why *Jesus* was sent and why he sent his *apostles*.

[¹ And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, ² and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.]

But if you think about it, the proclamation that the kingdom of God is at hand should be *terrifying* for sinners who have *rebelled* against the King. If the King has come, all that such rebels can expect is *judgment*.

But what if the King himself came not to *judge* sinners but to *save* sinners (John 3:17; 12:47)? What if he came to *proclaim* not only that the kingdom of God is at hand but also to *accomplish* a *work* on our behalf to ensure safe entrance into his kingdom (John 17:4; 19:30)? What if the King came to *freely grant* salvation, eternal life, and entrance into the kingdom of God for rebellious sinners like us?

Wouldn't that be good news to *rejoice* in? Wouldn't that be good news worth *proclaiming*?

For us, on this side of Jesus' death and resurrection, *that* is the good news of the kingdom of God *in full*.

- Even though God created us and should rightfully rule over us as King, we have rebelled against him and tried to usurp his kingship in our lives, and we are rightfully deserving of his wrath.
- But because of his great love, the King became one of us in the person of Jesus Christ to live the perfect, sinless life we could not live; to die the death that we deserve; and to resurrect to give us new hearts, new lives, and new citizenship in his kingdom.
- So now, if we respond to that good news of the kingdom with repentance of our sins and faith in Christ alone, we can have full assurance of forgiveness and citizenship in the kingdom of God.

In short, the only way to be included in the kingdom of God is to humbly trust in Christ alone as our crucified and risen King.

If you're not a believer in Jesus Christ, we're glad that you're here today. And more than anything, we want you to hear and understand this proclamation of good news of the kingdom of God with the utmost clarity. And my hope is that you would respond to this gospel proclamation by repenting of your sins and trusting in Christ alone as your King and Savior, so that you may be saved from your sins, inherit eternal life, and enter into his kingdom.

If you're already a believer of Jesus Christ, then the obvious application here is that we must *proclaim* the good news of the kingdom of God to others. If you're not sure where to start with that, let me offer three initial suggestions you can take.

[Three initial suggestions to proclaim the gospel to others:

1. Identify yourself as a follower of Christ]

First, identify yourself as a follower of Christ.³

Ask people what they did over the weekend, and when they inevitably ask you what you did over the weekend, tell them that you gathered with your church. And ask them about their weekend *again* next week and share *again* that you gathered with your church over the weekend. And do that week after week.

And if they ask more, great; feel free to share more. If they never ask you anything else about it, that's ok; at least know that you're a follower of Christ.

I'll share both the second and third suggestions and then explain them together.

[Three initial suggestions to proclaim the gospel to others:

1. Identify yourself as a follower of Christ
2. Pray that God would open doors to move conversations from the surface, to the serious, to the spiritual]

Second, pray that God would open doors to move conversations from the surface, to the serious, to the spiritual.⁴

[Three initial suggestions to proclaim the gospel to others:

1. Identify yourself as a follower of Christ
2. Pray that God would open doors to move conversations from the surface, to the serious, to the spiritual
3. Let others eavesdrop on how you preach the gospel to yourself amidst personal struggles]

Third, let others eavesdrop on how you preach the gospel to yourself amidst personal struggles.

- Let's say you ask someone what they did over the weekend; this is *surface* conversation.
- And let's say in the midst of sharing about their weekend, they share with you about a personal struggle in their life; you've now entered a *serious* conversation.
- And you might ask them how they're dealing with that struggle; now you're moving into a *spiritual* conversation because they're beginning to share their functional worldview of how to deal with life.
- Ask more questions to understand where they're coming from, and perhaps they'll ask you or you could ask them if they're open to hear how you deal with similar struggles.
- And as you share your personal struggles, let them hear how you preach the gospel to yourself in the midst of it.

For example, you could share about how you felt anxious and stressed about harsh comments that your boss or a friend made towards you, and how that poked at a deep insecurity you have about whether others will accept you for who you are or not. And then you could share that it was your relationship with God that brought you great comfort and security when you were feeling anxious about being accepted because even though you've sinned against God and deserve his rejection, he loves you and sent Jesus Christ to die and resurrect for your sins. And when you realize that, you're able to repent for desiring the

³ Jordan Raynor, "3 simple ways to identify yourself as a Christian today," November 15, 2021, in *The Word Before Work*, podcast, <https://jordanraynor.com/twbw/3-simple-ways-to-identify-yourself-as-a-christian-today>.

⁴ Jordan Raynor, "From the Surface, to the Serious, to the Spiritual," November 22, 2021, in *The Word Before Work*, podcast, <https://jordanraynor.com/twbw/from-the-surface-to-the-serious-to-the-spiritual>.

approval of others and rejoice in the fact that you have the acceptance of the only One who really matters in life and eternity.

I know that the conversation may not be that smooth, but if that's *truly* how you process your struggles in light of the gospel, then proclaiming the good news is simply allowing others to eavesdrop. It's verbalizing *aloud* to others what you *already* say and pray in your heart when you're struggling. It's basically *not* filtering out your relationship with God when you're talking about the struggles of life.

If Christ is your King, it should radically change how you deal with struggles; and since everyone is struggling with something, personal struggles are great opportunities to let others eavesdrop on how you preach the gospel to yourself—that they might *also* hear and see how it might look in their *own* lives if they were to repent and believe in Jesus as their King and Savior as well.

<pause>

So first, proclaim the kingdom of God; and second...

II. In the power of the King (vv. 3-6)

Verses 3-5 say this:

³ And he said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not have two tunics. ⁴ And whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. ⁵ And wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them."

For this *particular* mission, Jesus sends his apostles out with basically *nothing* other than what they *already* have with them.⁵ They are to rely on the hospitality of those whom they minister to in the different towns, but *ultimately* they are to rely on *Jesus'* word that they will be provided for.

Imagine again that you are one of Jesus' apostles. He just told you to do what you think you are totally incapable of doing—to proclaim the kingdom of God and perform accompanying miraculous signs—and now he tells you to go *without* bringing supplies that any traveler would deem as *necessary*. And on top of that, this is your *first* time doing anything like this.

Do you think the apostles felt *ready* for such a commission? Do you think they felt *confident* as they went out basically with just the clothes on their backs and Jesus' word that he had empowered them and that he would provide through the hospitality of others?

Probably not at all. But Jesus had a *different* perspective. The apostles had been *with him* and he was now sending them out with *his power* and *authority*, so as far as he was concerned, they had *everything* they needed and they didn't need anything else.

On some level, this should be *comforting* for us. Proclaiming the gospel doesn't require a lot. You don't need a certain amount of resources, a certain education level, a certain personality, or anything else. But if you're a Christian, then you have *everything* you need to proclaim the gospel.

In the Great Commission, Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:18). So we have Jesus' *authority* to proclaim the gospel and make disciples.

⁵ "Jesus is not prohibiting the Twelve from owning any of these items; rather, he is stressing the specific requirements of this particular mission. This is to be a relatively quick preaching journey, so they are not to spend time procuring extra supplies; those to whom they minister must support their mission (for the laborer deserves his food). Although some have seen a contradiction between the commissioning of the 12 disciples in Matthew (and Luke 9:3) as compared to a similar commissioning account in Mark 6:8-9, it seems best to understand the two accounts as being complementary—that is, that they report two different parts of a longer set of instructions, in which Jesus told the Twelve not to acquire new supplies, but that they could take the essential supplies needed for the journey, i.e., the staff and sandals that they already had" (Study note on Matt. 10:9-10, in *ESV Study Bible* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014]). Leon L. Morris (*Luke*, TNTC 3 [Nottingham, England: IVP, 2008]) writes: "Perhaps both ways of putting it mean 'Go as you are'. Jesus is instructing them to make no special preparation for this trip."

At the beginning of Acts, Jesus said, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses... to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). So as believers who have the Holy Spirit indwelling us, we have Jesus’ *power* to proclaim the gospel and be his witnesses.

And not only that, but Scripture says that “the gospel” is “the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (Rom. 1:16). So there is inherent *power* in the message of the gospel that we proclaim.

As Christians, we have Christ’s *authority* and Christ’s *power* to proclaim the gospel, which is *itself* the *power* of God for salvation to everyone who believes. So what else do we need? Christ has *already* provided us *all* we need to proclaim the kingdom of God in *his* power.

Now, again that was *Jesus’* perspective. But I’m sure the *apostles* didn’t quite have that perspective yet. Remember, in many ways, the apostles were just like you and me—and they were probably feeling like they lacked *a lot* to do what Jesus was calling them to do. Like us, the apostles *also* had a journey of faith. They didn’t grow their confident faith overnight, but through years of following Jesus and trusting him even when all their thoughts and feelings were to the *contrary*—even when it seemed to *defy* worldly wisdom. But as they went out with faith as small as a mustard seed, their faith began to grow as they experienced Jesus’ faithfulness over and over again.

Later on, at the Last Supper, when Jesus asked his apostles if they lacked anything when he sent them out *without* extra provisions, they responded, “Nothing” (Luke 22:35). Jesus wanted them to depend on his word and trust him for everything, and the only way they could learn that is by being in situations where they would *need* to exercise *faith* in him.

In a sense, this was *pedagogical* (or for the purpose of teaching) but not *permanent*. This was a *temporary* limitation Jesus placed on them in order to *teach* them that he is trustworthy to provide everything that they need. Later on, he would send them out with instructions to *take* necessary provisions (Luke 22:36), but he wanted them to *always remember* this experience here, so that no matter what they later faced, they would know without a doubt that Jesus would provide everything that they needed.

<pause>

For us, what is it that you feel like you need, that you don’t have, to proclaim the gospel to others?

For me, I personally feel like I don’t have the time and it’s been harder to find margin in my life to share the gospel with others these days.

I’m sure that lack of margin is probably an issue that many of us feel. Even if we wanted to (and I hope we all do), how in the world can we find the time to share the gospel with others?

One of the accountability questions that the pastors ask each other each week is, “Have you had any spiritual conversations/attempts with non-believers since we last met?”

And we concluded that week after week *cannot* go by where we’re complacent with *not* sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with others simply because we lack margin. If we lack margin, what can we do to address that? How can we put ourselves in more contexts with non-Christians, so that we can have more conversations to move from the surface, to the serious, to the spiritual?

And so, we’ve done different things. Pastor John regularly plays flag football where he’s been able to have more spiritual conversations with other players. I recently joined CrossFit again at a place that’s closer to my home and I’ve been going three times a week in the morning, and I talk with people there. I’ve been trying to talk to my neighbors more when we’re standing at the lift on our floor, and afterwards writing down their names and what I know about them, and praying that God would give me opportunities for more spiritual conversations with them.

All I’m saying is that the I know what it’s like to feel like I don’t have something that I feel like I need to proclaim the gospel to others. But by God’s grace and from weekly accountability, encouragement, and brainstorming with others, I’ve found that I actually *don’t* lack what I need.

God *didn't* add more hours to my day like I thought I needed him to do, but he provided me with a *context* that fits my schedule. Yes, it required a bit of creative thinking and discipline to work differently and to go to sleep earlier to wake up earlier, but Christ has given me what I need for what he has called me to do.

And if you're a Christian, he has given *you* what you need to share the gospel with others as well. And if you're not sure what it could look like, I encourage you to pray about it and ask others for accountability, encouragement, and ideas; perhaps God will surprise you like he did with the *apostles* when they *also* found that even with just the clothes on their backs and Jesus' word, they had *everything* they needed.

<pause>

So as the apostles went from town to town, whoever received them, they were to stay there the entire time.

The word "receive" is used in Luke's Gospel account to refer to welcoming and receiving God's Word (8:13), Jesus (9:48, 53), Jesus' followers (vv. 5, 48), and the kingdom of God (18:17).⁶ And in Matthew's parallel account, it connects receiving the *apostles* with listening to their *words* (Matt. 10:14). So those who *receive* the apostles are those who respond *positively* to their *message* of the kingdom of God; they are those who *repent* of their sins to receive *God* as their king and to have God's peace rest upon them (cf. Matt. 10:13).

Imagine how encouraging it would have been for the apostles to proclaim the kingdom of God in a town with such little confidence and to find *someone* believe their message and receive them into their home and provide for them, even as they encouraged them to continue ministering in their town.

But Jesus *also* told them that *though* there will be some who respond *positively* to them, there would also be *whole towns* who will respond *negatively* to them. There would be towns where *nobody* would receive them or their message. They would *reject* the message of the kingdom of God, and they would *not* recognize that they are sinners before God and that the only way for them to accept his reign over their hearts was through repentance.

And when that was the case, the apostles were to leave that town and "shake off the dust from [their] feet as a testimony against them."

We know from Matthew's parallel account that Jesus was sending his twelve apostles "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 10:6), meaning to their fellow *Jews*, most likely just around the region of Galilee. And there was a well-known custom that pious Jews would do whenever they returned from *Gentile* regions, where they would shake off the dust from their feet as a sign of cleansing and dissociation from the *defilement* of those pagan lands and the *judgment* that was to come upon them.⁷

This was a custom that the Jews would have been familiar with, except the apostles were not shaking off the dust from a *Gentile* region but a *Jewish* town. This was essentially declaring to them that as long as they rejected the good news of the kingdom of God, then they were just as defiled and worthy of judgment as the pagans; as long as they remained opposed to the gospel, they did *not* belong to the people of God—and they should only expect God's judgment upon them for their rebellion against him as King (Matt. 10:15). But this was *not* an irreversible declaration but a final *warning* to them—as long as they remained hardened in unrepentance and rejection of the gospel, then God's wrath remains on them in the final judgment.⁸ It was a final warning given in *hope* that they would eventually repent.

For us, we probably will *not* shake off the dust from our feet nowadays because this is *not* a custom that would be understood by those around us. But the *substance* of this custom, at least in the way that Jesus is instructing his apostles to use it, is a *loving warning* of the consequences of rejecting the message of the kingdom of God: "If you repent and believe in who the King is and what he offers you in the gospel, then

⁶ Study note on Luke 9:5, in *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014).

⁷ R. Kent Hughes, *Luke*, rev. ed., PTW (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013).

⁸ Grant R. Osborne, *Luke Verse by Verse*, ONTC (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018).

he has absorbed the judgment we deserve and he freely gives us salvation and life in him. But if you reject the King, then judgment for your sinful rebellion against him awaits you.”

But this warning is *not* spoken in a cold manner. If we truly love people, *that* love will come out in how we express this warning.

We *need* to warn people of the consequences of rejecting the gospel. But let me also say that this verse should *not* be used as an excuse for unloving, impatient evangelism where we push for quick decisions, and if someone isn't ready to trust in Christ at that very moment, then we give up, warn them, and move on to the next person.

We need to *patiently* and *lovingly* walk with our friends to understand and believe in the gospel. If they end up rejecting the gospel, we should also *lovingly warn* them of God's judgment that awaits all those who reject him, in hope that they would eventually repent and turn to Christ with faith. And if they're willing, we continue to be their friend and we remain willing to talk more about the gospel with them whenever they might be open again.

<pause>

Verse 6 then says:

6 And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.

Imagine again that you are one of Jesus' apostles. What would it have been like to do the works that previously only *Jesus* had done? You're no longer just an *observer* but now a *participant* in preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.

Hear the fearful shrieks of demons as they come out of the possessed. Hear the joyful sobs of family members as their loved ones are healed of diseases. But most importantly, hear the words of repentance and faith coming from the lips of those entering the kingdom of God and experiencing eternal life.

How do you feel? Perhaps privilege, joy, and purpose. Even though this is your *first* time doing anything like this and you feel *totally* inadequate, perhaps you're beginning to *connect the dots*. All this time that you've been listening to Jesus' preaching and observing his ministry was *not* just the *passing* of time, but it was his *preparation* for you to do what he has called you to do.

They had been *with Jesus* and *that* was preparing them in ways that they could've never imagined. These "uneducated, common men" (Acts 4:13) had the greatest training *not* in a classroom but in the presence of Christ.

For us, we may not have *exactly* the same training in terms of being in the presence of the *physical* Christ, but in many ways, we still *observe* long before we *participate*. We observe how Jesus and his disciples lived out and proclaimed the gospel in Scripture, where the apostles say to us, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1 NIV). We also *observe* how godly men and women around us live out the gospel (Titus 2:1-10) and how they proclaim it to those around them.

Long before I started living a life of purpose and principle, I *observed* Scripture and other godly brothers and sisters who lived such lives, and that helped me tremendously as I began to live for God's glory rather than my own.

Long before I became a husband and father, I *observed* Scripture and other godly husbands and fathers, and that has been irreplaceable in learning how to lead my family in a way that honors my wife and children and glorifies God.

We would do well to grow in our understanding of Scripture and to observe more intentionally those who are *evidencing* lives *transformed* by the gospel. You'll gain an invaluable education that will equip you more than you know long before you ever put it into practice.

- Observe older saints as they approach death, and you will learn how to die well.

- Observe brothers and sisters who work for the glory of God and the good of others, and you will learn how to integrate your faith and your work.
- Observe brothers and sisters who use their various gifts and limitations to share the gospel with others, and you will learn how to share the gospel with others as well.

If you want to begin living a life of privilege, joy, and purpose, we need to stop sulking over what we do *not* have and begin to step out in faith and realize how much Jesus *has* given us—*his* authority, *his* power, *his* powerful gospel, *his* presence, *his* Word, and other members of *his* body.

Jesus has given us *all* the resources we need. And even though I'm sure the apostles had their hesitations, they stepped out in faith and they experienced the overwhelming privilege, joy, and purpose of living for Christ.

As believers in Jesus Christ, we need to *exercise* our faith. But perhaps one of the most under-exercised muscles of our followership of Christ is *evangelism*—proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. And consequently, we're missing out on one of the greatest privileges, joys, and purposes of our followership of Christ.

In many ways, this short mission trip of the Twelve was just a “dress rehearsal” before the full outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, where not just the *apostles* but the *whole Church* would be equipped and sent out to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth (Acts 2; 1:8).⁹

And throughout the book of Acts, we see not *just* the apostles but *all* of Christ's disciples rejoicing and glorifying God (cf. Acts 13:48). Oftentimes, we read of the first-century Church and think that such joy was linked to the *miracles* they were experiencing, but they were *also* rejoicing when they were *beaten* (Acts 5:41) and in *prison* (Acts 16:25).

Their joy was ultimately found in knowing King Jesus and making him known. It didn't matter if they *suffered* for it; it didn't matter if they *died* for it. They had found their greatest privilege, joy, and purpose in the King alone, so their whole lives became about *knowing* him and making him *known*. Is that what *our* lives are about?

Proclaiming the kingdom in the power of the King was never meant to be a burden, but a privilege and joy. As believers in Jesus Christ, I pray that we would all experience that privilege and joy as we step out in faith to obey our King in making him known.

<pause>

So first, proclaim the kingdom of God; second, in the power of the King; and third...

III. To point to the King (vv. 7-9)

Verses 7-9 say this:

⁷ Now Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was happening, and he was perplexed, because it was said by some that John had been raised from the dead, ⁸ by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the prophets of old had risen. ⁹ Herod said, “John I beheaded, but who is this about whom I hear such things?” And he sought to see him.

Herod the tetrarch ruled over a fourth of the province of Judea in the Roman empire. Specifically, Herod ruled over the region of Galilee and Perea.

So when the ministry of powerful and authoritative preaching and healing that was previously done by only *one* man—Jesus—has now suddenly *multiplied* by *twelve* throughout Galilee, Herod began to hear about *all* that was happening.

⁹ Mikeal C. Parsons, *Luke*, PCNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2015), 147.

But what's interesting is that the *effect* of the *apostles'* preaching and healing ministry does *not* cause Herod to ask, "Who are these *twelve men*?" In fact, *nobody* is asking that question. *Everyone* cares about and rumors are circulating about only *one* man. They're wondering about the man who *sent* the Twelve. They're wondering about the *source* of power and authority given to the apostles. Everyone is asking about and wondering about *Jesus*—not the apostles.

In essence, the question that Herod asks—"Who is this?"—is the same question that has been asked *repeatedly* by *everyone* throughout the last few chapters of Luke's Gospel account.

- The scribes and Pharisees asked, "Who is this man who speaks blasphemies?" (5:21)
- John the Baptist asked Jesus, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" (7:19)
- Those reclining at table in Simon's house asked, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" (7:49)
- Jesus' own disciples asked, "Who then is this, that he commands even winds and water, and they obey him?" (8:25)

This has been the million-dollar question that *everyone* has been asking: Who is this *Jesus*?

And now, when Jesus is not even *directly* ministering but he's ministering *through* his apostles, the question has not changed. It's not suddenly about the *apostles* now, but it's still about *Jesus*.

There's a well-known story of a group of American pastors who traveled to London in the 1880s to hear and learn from some of the great English pastors of their time. On their first Sunday, they went to hear a famous preacher who pastored a large church of three to four thousand members. And after listening to his preaching, they left the church, marveling and proclaiming, "What a great preacher! What a great preacher!"

But the next Sunday, they went to another church to hear Charles Spurgeon preach. And after listening to him, they left the church, marveling again but this time they proclaimed, "What a great Savior! Hallelujah! What a great Savior!"¹⁰

Let me just say that *this* should be the effect of *any* gospel-centered ministry.

Whether you're ministering in a church, in your workplace, in your family, in your ministry to the marginalized in society, your ministry should point to the *King* rather than the *servant*. Your ministry should point to *Christ* rather than *yourself*.

Now as believers in Jesus Christ, is that why you do the things that you do? To bring glory to God? That through the ministry of your life, others would walk away marveling and proclaiming "What a great Savior! Hallelujah! What a great Savior!" At the very least, are you longing for people to wonder and ask, "Who is this Jesus?"

Or are you a glory thief?¹¹ Are you letting your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to *you* rather than to *God* (Matt. 5:16)?

The truth is that we *all* have mixed motives. We want people to see *Jesus*, but we want them to see *us* too. We want people to think that *Jesus* is great, but we want them to think that *we* are great too. But we need to get out of the frame. It's *not* about us. It's *not* about *our* glory and *our* kingdom, but it's about glorifying *God* and proclaiming *his* kingdom.

Now what do you think helped keep the *apostles* from growing proud? Their power and authority were clearly *not* their own. They were a bunch of *nobodies*, but Christ invited them, he equipped them, and he commissioned them. They knew that it was all a *privilege*, not an entitlement. They knew that without Jesus, they can do *nothing* (John 15:5). What they had and what they were doing was all by God's *grace*.

¹⁰ John D. Currid, "Reflections on a Teaching Career: 'What a Great Savior!'" accessed August 26, 2022, <https://journal.rts.edu/article/reflections-teaching-career-great-savior/>.

¹¹ Garrett Kell, "Stop Photobombing Jesus," The Gospel Coalition, April 29, 2017, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/stop-photobombing-jesus/>.

None of us should think of ourselves more highly than we ought (Rom. 12:3), for what do we have that we didn't receive—and if we received it, why do we boast as if we didn't receive it (1 Cor. 4:7)? We ought not to be deceived; every good and perfect gift is from God above (James 1:16-17), for from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever (Rom. 11:36).

God *alone* deserves all the glory. So just like John the Baptist, may we be able to say, “*He [Jesus] must increase, but I must decrease*” (John 3:30).

Brothers and sisters in Christ, could we actually make that our prayer? “God, my heart’s desire is that *you* would increase, so help me to decrease, so that I stop photobombing Jesus and so that I stop stealing glory that only you deserve.”

As we pray, “God, *your* kingdom come,” may we also pray, “God, smash *my* kingdom.”

That may seem like a radical prayer, but it should be the prayer of *every* Christian. The kingdom of *self* is a *rival* in our hearts to being submitted to the kingdom of *God*. Why would we want to go on building and submitting to a kingdom that will ultimately lead to death and despair, when life and joy is freely given to us in the kingdom of God by the King himself?

For all who believe in the good news of the kingdom of God, we have been *rescued* from the kingdom of darkness and *transferred* into the kingdom of God’s beloved Son, who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins by his own blood poured out for us (Col. 12:13-13).

If we are united to Christ by faith, then just as he died, we have *also* died to our old life of living for *ourselves* and the kingdom of *self*; and just as he was raised, we *also* have been given a new life to live for *Christ* and the kingdom of *God* (2 Cor. 5:15).

Our whole lives now belong to the King who graciously calls us to himself, saves us, equips us, and sends us. So as we *proclaim* the good news of the kingdom of God, in the *power* of the King, may we do it all to *point* to the King.

<pause>

Here’s the...

Life Application

1. Is *God* your King or are *you* the king over your life? Examine how much you think about *yourself* and how much *you* are the reference point for all of life.
2. Who are some people in your life who are “far from God”? Pray for them, grab coffee/meal with them, and ask God to open doors to move conversations from the surface, to the serious, to the spiritual.
3. How have you been a “glory thief”? Confess to God and to others about how you tend to point others to *yourself* rather than *King Jesus*, pray for one another, and follow up with one another.

The One Thing

***Proclaim the kingdom of God, in the power of the King,
to point to the King.***

Conclusion

If you’re able, can we all stand as we respond to God’s Word together?