

Jesus Sends the Twelve to Preach the Kingdom of God

Luke 9:1-9

Key Verse: 9:2

“...and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.”

We began the New Year with Isaiah chapter 6, by looking up at the holy, almighty God who is seated on his throne, high and exalted. Seeing the Lord's sovereign rule and utter holiness brought healing and new strength to our hearts. Let's fix our eyes on Jesus in 2010! One way to do so is to study Luke's gospel together every Sunday, learning more about Jesus. When we do so faithfully, we can grow spiritually throughout this New Year.

In 9:1-9, Jesus sends out the Twelve to preach the kingdom of God. Until now, the Twelve had mainly observed. They watched Jesus preach the kingdom, drive out demons, heal a paralytic, calm a storm, and raise the dead. Jesus worked hard, and they said “Wow!” many times, and then felt hungry and sleepy. Now Jesus was sending his disciples to preach and to heal. Through this event, we can learn what Jesus really wants his servants to do: preach the kingdom of God. We can also learn how to do this. May Jesus equip us all to preach the kingdom of God through this study.

First, Jesus' disciples should struggle most to become like him (1a).

One day Jesus called a meeting of "the Twelve" (1a). Who were the Twelve? Let's review this briefly. The Twelve refers to his disciples, such as Peter, James, John, whom he had specially chosen to learn from him and follow in his footsteps. Jesus had designated them apostles. “Apostle” means, “one who is sent.” Jesus wanted to send them out into the world to do what he had been doing. Though they were ordinary men, Jesus had a great plan, and great hope for them. In chapter 6, we see that Jesus first taught them the inner quality they needed to develop. In brief, Jesus wanted them to grow in the image of God. As God is merciful to the ungrateful and wicked, so they should become merciful. Jesus wanted them to love their enemies. Learning to practice mercy and love is of utmost importance to Jesus' disciples.

Look at verse 1a. Jesus called the Twelve together. Jesus trained them together; they were like a team. Sometimes, we Americans tend to be individualistic. We try to do everything by ourselves, and in our own way. We may prefer a personal trainer to group training. To grow in Jesus we need to learn in

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community with other believers. It is through living together that hidden truths about ourselves and others are brought to light. We learn who we really are, and how much we need Jesus' forgiveness and cleansing. As we repent and receive Jesus' grace, we can be sanctified and truly grow in his image. We can learn to love and serve others practically. This is fundamental to being Jesus' disciple. Following Jesus is not about learning techniques and strategies, but about becoming like Jesus in the inner being. This is important to keep in mind as we study the rest of this passage.

Second, Jesus gave them power and authority (1b).

Jesus' disciples had been growing in character, and they were committed. So even though they were young, Jesus entrusted them with spiritual power. Verse 1b says, **“(Jesus) gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases....”** Demons are evil spirits who deceive in order to destroy (Jn 8:44). They carry out the bidding of Satan, God's enemy. To be sent out by Jesus means to enter into a cosmic conflict between the holy God Almighty and Satan. So those who are sent must be ready to fight. They must have the attitude of soldiers of Christ Jesus. Preaching the kingdom is not a hobby or a job. It is a spiritual battle against the forces of evil. In Malaysia recently, some Christians began to refer to God as Allah in an effort to reach out to Muslims and share the kingdom of God. This made some Muslims angry. They think that only they can call on Allah. So they began to firebomb Christian churches. It may be the work of demons. We must pray for our Christian brothers. Jesus gives us power and authority over evil spirits. Jesus had already defeated their leader, Satan. So junior demons were no problem for Jesus. **However, Jesus' people must pray for Jesus' power and authority before doing anything. Prayer is the foundation for effective gospel work.**

Third, Jesus sent his disciples to preach (2a).

Look at verse 2. **“...and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.”** Jesus' mission for them was clear: preach the kingdom of God and heal the sick. What is preaching? Preaching is a way of communicating. Its does not mean to shout or to rant, but “to proclaim.” In ancient times, kings used heralds to deliver their messages in public places. The herald shared the king's message just as it was, claiming the authority of the king. Sometimes rebellious people did not like the message, and they attacked the herald. A good herald had to be ready to give his life to proclaim the king's message. In the same way, effective gospel workers deliver King Jesus' message with a life-giving spirit.

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Preaching is primarily the public presentation of the gospel before an assembled audience. The goal is not mere education, but to move sinners' hearts with the word of God so that we repent of our sins and accept Jesus as King. One way of doing this is through the Sunday message. Those called to preach in this way must devote themselves and do their best (1 Ti 4:13; 2 Ti 2:15). Not everyone is called to preach in this way. Yet everyone should be involved in the preaching ministry. We should all pray for the messenger (Eph 6:19-20). Even Paul asked prayer from the Ephesians so that he would not be fearful, but proclaim the kingdom boldly. I also need your prayers not to be fearful, but bold in preaching the kingdom. Your prayers are important.

There are many other ways to preach the kingdom. We can share Bible stories with others. We can share personal testimonies of Jesus' grace with others. We can prepare and share a gospel key verse presentation. This can be done in five minutes, during a break between classes, or at the lunch table at work. We can share the kingdom through one-to-one Bible studies. We can reveal the kingdom through Christ-like living. This is why Franciscans say, "Preach the gospel. And if necessary, use words." The kingdom can be proclaimed through books, movies, music, and other arts. The UBF website team posts news of God's work throughout the world. Dorotea Papa is designing a web page to proclaim the kingdom. Everyone can be involved in some way. Jesus wants us to preach the kingdom as of first importance. Let's pray for a spirit of boldness and make this a priority in our lives.

Jesus sent his disciples also to heal the sick. Sharing the kingdom is not just about communicating a message. It is also about communicating the love of God in tangible ways. We must be concerned about the practical problems people have with their health, school study, jobs, and so on. We must help people experience the love of God tangibly, by faith.

Fourth, the message of the kingdom of God (2b).

Jesus' disciples must preach the kingdom of God as of first importance. By the way, what is the kingdom of God? Simply speaking, it is where God's anointed king reigns. Jesus is that king. So where Jesus is, there is the kingdom of God. When anyone accepts Jesus as their Lord and Savior, the kingdom of God comes to their hearts. King Jesus drives out all darkness, and rules over them with God's holy love.

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Then, how do we preach the kingdom of God? We can learn from Jesus. Luke 4:18,19 records Jesus' first message. Jesus said: **“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”** Jesus did not outline a complicated theological treatise. Jesus used simple Biblical metaphors to express that the coming of the kingdom was good news. Jesus loves those who accept him as king. Jesus works for good in their lives. Jesus blesses them with real victory.

However, people easily misunderstand the kingdom of God. It is not primarily about living a better life in this world. When Jesus talked about freedom and release, many Jews assumed Jesus would overthrow Roman rule and establish a kingdom like David's where Israel was the center of the world. They envisioned world conquest and material abundance as the fruit of the coming kingdom. In the same way, according to statistics Dr. Scott Moreau shared with us, 75% of American evangelicals think they have the right to freedom, prosperity and self-determination. However, the kingdom of God is not of this world. Primarily it is the spiritual reign of Christ in the lives of people. Jesus taught that sin was our real problem--not Roman rule, high taxes or social inequality. Jesus came to solve our problem of sin and death. To do so Jesus had to go to Jerusalem and die on the cross. His body was pierced, and he shed his blood. Jesus died for our sins. On the third day, God raised Jesus from the dead and made him the first fruits of eternal life. Jesus came to forgive our sins, heal us, cleanse us and restore the image of God in us. Jesus came to fit us for eternal life with him. The focus of the kingdom is on the world to come. While in this world, we enjoy peace and love in Jesus. But Jesus does not treat us like spoiled children. He allows us to go through hardships and to suffer together with the people of the world to refine our faith and to make us compassionate. He does not want us to get too comfortable in this world, but to long for the world to come.

Since Jesus ascended into heaven and poured out his Spirit on his apostles and upon all flesh, his one directive for his church has been to preach the kingdom to the ends of the earth. Throughout history, wherever Jesus has been received, people, communities and nations have experienced God's reign of peace and love upon them. However, sharing the message in other cultures or nations requires much prayer and willingness to adapt to the ways of communication of people in the mission field. Missiologists refer to this as contextualization. For example, in 1962, Missionary Don and Carol Richardson went to the Sawi people of New Guinea to preach the kingdom to them. The Sawis were cannibals and they often fought

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bloody wars with each other. In their culture, those who could betray others most cleverly were regarded as heroes. So when the Richardsons told the story of Judas' betrayal and Jesus' death, the Sawis thought Judas was the hero of the story. The Richardsons were shocked, but they did not give up. They studied Sawi culture carefully and discovered the concept of the "peace child." In that culture of betrayal, when a tribal leader wanted to make peace, he sent his own son to live with his neighboring tribe. It was a pledge that he would not attack that tribe for the sake of his son. Though the comparison does not perfectly explain the gospel, it enlightened the Sawis to the message of God's kingdom. God offered his Son to mankind to make peace, though we had been his enemies. The Sawis were moved and many of them accepted Jesus by faith. They were transformed a loving community which worships Jesus Christ together. Jesus wants to spread his kingdom to the whole world until people of every tribe and language have heard the message.

Ultimately, the message of the kingdom is a message of hope. Jesus promised that he will come again to this world. He will come as the glorious King and Judge of all creation and render a final judgment. He will destroy all evil and unrighteousness. He will throw the devil and his followers into the fiery lake of burning sulfur where they are tormented day and night, and can never again bother God's children. Sin will be totally eradicated. Death will be swallowed up in victory. Those who accepted Jesus as their King will live with him forever in peace and love. Everything that was ever wrong will be made right. Revelation 21:4 says, **"There will be no more death, or mourning or crying or pain."** There will be life and love and peace and everlasting rejoicing and praising God. The glory of God will shine forth in all creation without blemish. This is what God wants to do and this is our true hope.

We have thought about the kingdom of God according to the revelation we have in the 21st century, in the light of gospel history and church history. However, in the context of this passage, the disciples did not know all this. Jesus had not yet told them of his death and resurrection. So what then could they preach? They could say **"the kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news."** And they could testify to what Jesus had done. The most important thing is not how much we know, but stepping out in faith to share what we do know. The Lord can use one Bible verse, or one line of our testimony, to break into someone's life with the message of the kingdom. We must do our best to grow in the knowledge of God and his kingdom. But we must not wait until we know everything to begin preaching it. Then no one could preach. No one knows everything about the kingdom, not even Mother Barry. But Jesus uses those who

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share what they know about the kingdom of God by faith. Then we can please God and be a blessing to perishing people in this sinsick world.

Fifth, Jesus' principles in preaching the kingdom (3-9).

In verses 3-5 Jesus instructs his disciples how to carry out their evangelistic mission. It should be noted that later, in Luke 22:35-36, Jesus relaxes these instructions. Jesus does not want us to become legalistic about instructions here, but to glean principles. **One principle is to depend on God for everything.** Look at verse 3. **“He told them: 'Take nothing for the journey--no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra tunic.’”** Usually, when going on a journey, we try to plan well and bring everything we will need. In the course of doing so we can become engrossed in worries and anxiety. We can think too much about our personal comfort and lose spiritual direction. Jesus wants us to trust him for everything, depend on God alone, and go to the mission field by faith.

A second principle Jesus taught was to raise leaders. Look at verse 4. **“Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town.”** By doing this, they could make a deep relationship with one family. This family could become the basis for establishing a church which could serve the community after the disciples left. Although they delivered their message to many people, raising one family as leaders was important.

A third principle Jesus taught was not to compromise. Look at verse 5. **“If people do not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave their town, as a testimony against them.”** If the disciples took rejection personally, they could fall into self-condemnation. Then they might lose their focus and try to make people like them. They might even be tempted to compromise the message to make it more appealing. That is why many preachers in our time do not use the words “sin,” “repentance,” “judgment,” “cross,” or “self-denial.” Jesus’ people must not compromise the gospel message. Jesus said, **“Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved. Whoever does not believe will be condemned”** (Mk 16:16). **The gospel is a matter of eternal salvation. Jesus’ people must deliver the message as it is. When their message is rejected, they should shake the dust off their feet and leave. This is the best way to testify to the gravity of the message. And it helps the disciples to keep a right attitude toward the message.**

In verses 6-9 we learn that Jesus’ disciples followed Jesus’ instructions and preached the kingdom and healed the sick. Though they were young and inexperienced, their ministry was very powerful. They healed many people with

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the power of Jesus. King Herod, who was full of guilt over his sin of beheading John the Baptist, forgot all about governing his kingdom and only wanted to figure out who Jesus was. Indeed, the kingdom of this world under the rule of the devil was shaken to its core by the disciples' evangelistic mission. Though they were weak, Jesus, the Almighty God, was doing great things in and through them.

In this passage we learn that Jesus really wants his disciples to preach the kingdom of God in this dying world. Jesus loves the world and he wants to restore God's glory in the world. Jesus wants to send us out to share the message of his kingdom. We cannot do this in our own strength. We need the courage and power and wisdom that only Jesus gives. Let's pray and make a new decision to preach the kingdom in this troubled world. Lord, may your kingdom come.