

AM Luke 9:1-17

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning again, friends. It's good to be gathered together around God's Word. It's good to listen to what God is saying to us through His Word.

Continuing our studies this morning in Luke's Gospel. Luke's Gospel, we've come to this incident now in Luke chapter 9. Luke chapter 9, where Jesus sends out the apostles on a mission.

He feeds the 5,000 with just a few bits of food. We'll read it together now. Luke chapter 9. And reading from verses 1 through 17.

The first 17 verses of Luke chapter 9. And He called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases.

And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. And He said to them, take nothing for your journey. No staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money. And do not have two tunics. And whatever house you enter, stay there and from there depart.

[0 : 5 7] And wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town, shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them. And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the Gospel and healing everywhere.

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. By some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the prophets of old had risen.

Herod said, John, I beheaded. But who is this about whom I hear such things? And he sought to see him. On their return, the apostles told them all that they had done.

And he took them and withdrew apart to a town called Bethsaida. When the crowds learned it, they followed him. And he welcomed them and spoke to them of the kingdom of God and cured those who needed healing.

Now, the day began to wear away. And the twelve came and said to him, Send the crowd away into the surrounding villages and countryside to find lodging and get provisions, for we are here in a desolate place.

[2 : 0 1] But he said to them, You give them something to eat. They said, We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless we are to go and buy food for all these people. For there were about five thousand men.

And he said to his disciples, Make them sit down in groups of about fifty each. And they did so, and made them all sit down. And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing over them.

Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. And they all ate and were satisfied. And what was left over was picked up twelve baskets of broken pieces.

Amen. This is a reading of God's inspired and inerrant word. Let us turn to the Lord in prayer. Now let us pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you this morning for your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank you that he is our Savior. We thank you that he is the perfect, spotless Lamb of God, sent to take away the sin of the world. We thank you, Father, that we can still enjoy meeting together, that we can still enjoy fellowship together.

[3 : 13] We pray that you will be with us as a nation as we continue to face this coronavirus, as we continue to take these steps to come out of lockdown.

We pray, Heavenly Father, that you would give our leaders wisdom and guidance, that you would give them the right pace to take things at. We pray for all of those, Heavenly Father, who have been bereaved in recent weeks, praying that you would bring comfort to them, that you would be near to those who are brokenhearted, that you would bind up those who are suffering.

We pray for all of those who are connected to the congregation in some way, who are perhaps feeling the strain, perhaps those who are shielding, perhaps those who are isolated, perhaps those who are self-isolating.

May you keep your hand upon your people, we ask. And we pray that you would be with us now as we come to your word. Help us to understand it, help us to see the great truths of it, and help us to put it into practice, we ask.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. So let's turn then please to this section, Luke chapter 9, Luke chapter 9 and verses 1 through 17.

[4 : 22] Luke chapter 9 verses 1 through 17. And we're going to think about this section together this morning. Who was that? It's maybe a question that you find yourself asking after your spouse comes off the phone.

Well, who was that? Who were you talking to? It often happens to me at church gatherings. You might be at the General Assembly, you might be at Presbytery, you might be at some sort of church gathering, and someone will come and start talking to you fervently.

They will ask me in great detail about the work in Dumfries. They will ask me in great detail about how my family's getting on. And whenever they walk away to start a conversation with someone else, invariably I find myself turning to someone standing nearby and saying, who was that?

How do I know them? And that's the question that's building in Luke's gospel as we come to it this morning. Who is this?

Who is this Jesus? We've seen the disciples ask it as Jesus calmed the storm at sea. Well, who is this that even the wind and the waves obey him?

[5 : 32] We saw the religious leaders ask the question at Simon's house. Well, who is this who forgives sins? And that's the question that's building. Who is this?

We saw the demon-possessed man saying that he knew who Jesus was. We saw it in a sense last week with seeing Jesus as the one who had power over sickness and power over death as he healed Jairus' daughter and healed the woman with the issue of blood.

Who is this? It's the question that's on Herod's lips this morning in verse 7. Well, who is this? It's not John. I beheaded him. Who then is this?

In a sense, we don't get the answer this morning. In a sense, we don't find out the end of the story this morning. We'll find that out next week. We'll see the disciples' response to the question, well, who is this, next week as we come to it.

But we do see some other things this morning that further cause us to ask, well, who is this? Some things that are building the tension. Some things that are building the suspense in the narrative.

[6 : 41] Who is this? I want to see three things this morning. See three things together this morning. Firstly, we want to think about the scent on a mission.

We see the disciples sent on this kind of preaching itinerant ministry, if you like. Secondly then, we want to see how Herod says that it was said by some.

Some said Jesus was John the Baptist. Some said Jesus was Elijah. Some said that he was one of the prophets of old. And then thirdly, finally, we want to see Jesus' instruction to the disciples, saying to them, you give them something to eat.

Sent on a mission, said by some, something to eat. So firstly then, we think about the disciples as they're sent on this mission. Sent on a mission. And we see that in verses 1 through 6.

Verses 1 through 6. Sent on a mission. Last time we were in Luke's Gospel together, we thought about this incident with Jesus and these two women, or these two girls, if you like.

[7 : 42] We saw Jesus raising Jairus' daughter from the dead. We saw Jesus healing and speaking kindly to this woman who had the discharge of blood. Times moved on.

And as we come to verse 1 then, Jesus calls, we're told, the twelve together. And notice what he does. He gives them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases.

The disciples are given this power and authority. They're given this responsibility, if you like. But notice that it's a delegated power. It's a delegated authority. Now what do I mean by that?

Well, the disciples didn't have this power in and of themselves. The disciples didn't have this authority over demons and to cure diseases in and of themselves. They were given it by Christ. They were sent by Christ on this mission.

They were equipped by Christ for the mission on which they were about to embark. They were given this authority and power to further the cause of the Gospel. They were given this power and authority to enhance the Gospel proclamation.

[8 : 45] They had the authority, yes. But it was a delegated authority. They had the authority, yes. But it was an authority that came from their connection to Christ. From the fact that they were learners. They were disciples of Christ.

Now we need to be careful here. We need to be careful that we're not jumping from, this is the power and authority Jesus gave the disciples, so therefore this is the power and authority he's given us.

We're not jumping straight from the context of the disciples who first heard these words to the context of ourselves today. But we can say some things. Think about those very famous words at the end of Matthew's Gospel.

Matthew 28. As Jesus is preparing to leave, what does he remind the disciples of in Matthew 28? He says to them, All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me.

All authority on heaven and earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of every nation, baptizing in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

[9 : 53] And I am with you always to the end of the age. What we have there is a promise that Jesus is with us to the end of the age.

What we have there is the fact, the assurance that Jesus has been given all power and authority in heaven and on earth. That belongs to Christ. And he has sent his church on a mission until he returns.

He has sent us on a mission to baptize. He has sent us on a mission to make disciples of all nations. And we have that assurance then that we go with the power and authority of Christ.

It's a delegated power and authority. It's a power and authority that comes from our connection with him. But it's a power and authority that we as the church have. When we preach the gospel, we do so with Christ's power and authority.

When we try to make disciples of all nations, we do so with Christ's power and authority. We speak with authority, not because it's natural to us, not because we have anything in and of ourselves worth listening to.

[10 : 59] But we speak with power and authority because we speak on behalf of Christ. We speak on behalf of the one whom all power and authority has been given to. That's why we shouldn't shrink back from preaching the gospel.

That's why we shouldn't shrink back from declaring God's word in the public square. Some will mock. Some will sneer. Some will refuse to listen. But God's word is authoritative.

He sends them out to preach. He sends them out to heal. He sends them out with this authority. But he also gives them some instructions in verse 3. And they're very odd instructions, aren't they?

He says to them, verse 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. I can remember the first time that I came to preach here in Dumfries Free Church.

It's probably, it'll be near enough, four years ago to the day, almost actually. I can remember when we were getting on the boat in Belfast.

[12 : 07] Suddenly I remembered that I didn't have anything to preach in. All I had brought with me were old clothes, old jeans, and old jumpers. Now that wasn't intentional. I didn't set out to do that.

It was just a kind of an accidental oversight. But yet Jesus here tells the disciples, he specifically tells them, he gives them the instruction, Don't take two tunics.

Don't take any belt. Don't take any bread. Don't take any staff. Take nothing for your journey. It doesn't seem to make sense, does it?

It goes against what every planner would tell you to do. It goes against everything that you would think. Natural. So why does Jesus tell his disciples to do that? Why does Jesus tell his disciples to take nothing with them for the journey?

Well there are two things I think. The first is that it shows the urgency of their mission. That they weren't to be weighed down carrying around ten different changes of clothing.

[13 : 08] They weren't to be weighed down by packing. They weren't to take up valuable time by packing. Their mission was an urgent mission. They were on a mission to tell people about the kingdom of God.

They were sharing the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And it had to be done quickly. Their mission demanded that they act quickly. But secondly I think, It reminds the disciples whose mission they're on.

It reminds the disciples who they're dependent on. You see they're not dependent on their own resources. They're not dependent on the fact that they've got tunics and bread and money and bags and belts and staffs and all of these things.

Rather they're to be reminded that they're dependent on God. They're dependent on God. They're dependent on God's mission. They're dependent on God's providence. They're dependent on God's grace.

And so therefore they're not to take their own provisions. But to look for the provision of God. It's a good reminder to us. That ultimately we need to cast ourselves on God.

[14 : 14] Ultimately we need to rely on God's provision for us. On God's good gifts to us. It's easy today, certainly in the West anyway, certainly where we are.

It's easy today to be materialistic. It's easy today to be reliant on our own resources. You know, I have a good job. I've got money in the bank. I've got a nice car.

I've got a nice house. I've got everything set up. We're reliant on our own resources rather than on God. But we should be thankful to God when he meets our needs.

But most of all we should be thankful to God for the saviour that we have from sin. The ultimate resource that he's given us. Life and life eternal. Jesus continues to them, verse 4.

Whatever house you enter, stay there. And from there depart. You know, he's saying to them, don't be looking around for better lodgings. Don't be trying to switch from a two-star to a four-star accommodation. Wherever you go, stay there.

[15 : 15] Leave that town from the same house. And if the town won't receive you, then shake off the dust from your feet against them. Remind them that they rejected the kingdom of God as it came near.

And their mission seems to be a success, verse 6. Their mission on a worldly sense seems to have been a success. They come back. They go through all the villages, we're told, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.

In purely worldly terms, their mission seems to be a success. In purely worldly ideas, their mission seems to be a success. So they're sent on a mission.

Secondly then, though, we want to think about how it's said by some. Said by some. And we see that in verses 7 through 9. Verses 7 through 9. Said by some. So it's during this mission trip.

It's during this preaching tour. It's during this crusade, if you like. The word reaches Herod the Tetrarch, verse 7, about all that was happening. He'd most likely heard about the disciples traveling around healing.

[16 : 18] But he'd also probably heard about Jesus. About him raising people from the dead. About him driving out demons from people who were demon possessed. About him curing all kinds of illness and disease.

And it confuses him. He doesn't know what to make of it. Well, who is this Jesus, is the question that he kind of asks himself. And we see verse 7.

It was said by some that John had been raised from the dead. His advisors come to him and some of them say, Well, look, this is what's happening in Herod. I know you're confused about this. But actually, John's been raised from the dead. But other of his advisors come and say to him, verse 8, No, no, no, no, no.

It's not John at all. It's Elijah that's appeared. And others come again and say, No, no, no. It's not John. It's not Elijah. You've got it all wrong. It's actually one of the men of God of old.

All of them, notice, come to the same conclusion. All of them come to the conclusion that Jesus was a man sent from God.

[17 : 19] They don't know who he is. They don't know what he's about. But they know he's a man sent from God in some way, shape, or form. Either he's John the Baptist, or he's a prophet, or he's one of the men of God of old.

But Herod just doesn't know, does he? He just can't work it out. And he says, verse 9, Well, look, John I beheaded. I know John's dead. I killed him. But who is this?

Who is this about whom I hear such things? And he sought to see him. Whoever he is, it isn't John. I know John's dead. But who is he?

Who is he? Maybe that's a question you find yourself asking this morning. Who is this Jesus? Maybe you don't come to church very often. Maybe you've stumbled across this sermon on YouTube.

You're perplexed by all that happens around us, by all the difficulties and dangers of life. And you're asking yourself the question this morning, Well, who is this Jesus?

[18 : 31] Everyone at the time agreed that he was a man sent from God. All of Herod's advisors agreed in one way, shape, or form that he was a man sent from God. But it's a question that you need to answer for yourself this morning in the same way that Herod did.

And what are you going to say? Well, who is this Jesus? Is he just another religious figure? Is he just another John the Baptist? Is he another Elijah?

Is he another man sent from God to bring us a revelation about God? Think about what John the Baptist said about him. John the Baptist said that Jesus was greater than he.

John the Baptist said that he wasn't worthy to stoop down and untie Jesus' sandals. John the Baptist said that he was the forerunner going ahead of the Messiah.

Maybe you think Jesus was just another man sent from God, another prophet, another religious teacher. Well, that doesn't tie in with what Jesus himself said about himself, does it? That Jesus himself said that he was the way, the truth, and the life.

[19 : 44] That no one comes to God except through him. It doesn't sound like just another prophet. It doesn't sound like just another man of God. Maybe today, if you're honest, you'll say that Jesus is, at best, an irrelevance.

And at worst, an invention of historical fiction. Friends, I said to you respectfully that the evidence for the life of Christ is irrefutable.

The man Jesus Christ existed. The question for you is, who is he? Who is he? Quite simply, he's the son of God.

He's the savior of mankind from sin. And he's about to prove it to you. Because he performs another miraculous event that only the son of God could do.

Thirdly, finally then, we see this incident that we've entitled something to eat. Jesus feeding the 5,000. And we see that in verses 10 through 17. So the 12 come back, verse 10.

[20 : 57] They come back and they tell Jesus all that they've done. They come back and they tell him about the success of their mission trip. And notice what he does in verse 10. Because again, it's a little bit surprising. Again, it's maybe not what we would expect to happen.

They come back and they say, verse 10, look, everything's gone great. We've preached. We've healed. We've cast out demons, verse 10. And what does Jesus do? And he took them away, verse 10, and withdrew apart to a town called Bethsaida.

The implication here is that Jesus wants some time alone with his disciples. That Jesus wants some downtime, if you like. They've had this intense spiritual high. They've had this experience of preaching the kingdom of God.

They've had this experience of healing diseases. And now Jesus wants some time alone with them. But why? They've just done such great work.

Why does he withdraw with them? Why does he take them away from the front line? Why doesn't he allow them to keep going? Why doesn't he allow the ministry to multiply rather than bringing them together and keeping them together?

[22 : 04] Why does he take this time away with them? Well, I think it's clear at this point that the disciples are building a picture of who Jesus really is. They're beginning to see that he really is the Christ.

They're beginning to see that he really is the Messiah. And they're beginning to understand some of the implications of that. But they still don't fully understand it. We're going to think next week about Peter's confession of Jesus as the Christ, as the Son of God.

Now, Luke doesn't record it for us, but some of the other Gospels record Peter's reaction. So Jesus tells them what it will mean. Jesus tells them what being the Messiah will mean. It will mean suffering and death and rejection.

And what does Peter do? He rebukes him. He says, no, that's not how the Messiah works. That's not what the Messiah does. And I think that helps us understand how the disciples see Jesus.

They see him as the Messiah, yes, but they don't understand what he's going to do. They don't understand fully what being the Messiah will mean. And so this is an opportunity then for Jesus to draw aside with his disciples.

[23 : 12] This is an opportunity to use the modern parlance. This is an opportunity for Jesus to take his disciples on a retreat, to go to a conference and be taught more about what it would mean to be the Messiah, to be taught more about what it meant to be the Christ.

Whatever his plans are, they're about to be thrown into confusion, aren't they? Whatever his plans are, they're about to be cast aside because, verse 11, the town and crowds learned that he was in Bethsaida and they followed him.

They decided to go and see Jesus. They decided to go and see what's happening. They decided to follow the teacher. One of the things about lockdown has been more and more people are working from home or at least trying to work from home.

And it's often quite a tension, isn't it? Because you'll have the kids there who are needing school. You'll have people there who are trying to hold down a full-time job and work from home as well. And those two things often come into conflict, come into conflict.

Parents might be trying to do some work and suddenly one of the children will appear and say, well, mummy, daddy, I need a snack. Mummy, daddy, I need help with this schoolwork that I'm supposed to be doing. The parents are trying to do one thing and yet the kids are there demanding attention.

[24 : 36] Jesus has tried to take the disciples away here and the crowds come. Jesus is in one sense, I suppose, trying to do one thing and the crowds come. But notice that Jesus doesn't speak harshly to them.

Jesus doesn't cast them away as we might be tempted to do with our children during work time. He doesn't get frustrated with them. He doesn't turn them away. Rather, He says, come.

He welcomes them. He teaches them about the kingdom of God. But there's a problem in verse 12. The day began to wear away. The people have been so rapt with Jesus' teaching.

The people have been so encouraged by listening to what Jesus had to say that they hadn't noticed the day going by. We've all listened to people like that and had experiences like that where we're so engrossed with the action that we don't notice.

The day whiling away. The day's getting on and the people have had nothing to eat but the disciples, the disciples, they're the realists. So they come to Jesus, verse 12, and they say, look, it's getting late.

[25 : 40] These people have had nothing to eat. Send them away. Send them away so they can find a hotel. Send them away so they can find a bed and breakfast. Send them away so that they might find something to eat.

Jesus' response seems a bit strange. It seems a bit actually sarky, doesn't it? What does he say to the disciples?

Verse 13, they've come and they've said, look, we need to send these people away. We've got nothing to eat. They've had nothing to eat. And Jesus says to them, verse 13, well look, you give them something to eat. You feed them.

You provide for them. You give them something to eat. You deal with their problems. And the disciples say, well look, all we've got are these five loaves and two fish.

That's all we have. That's our entire resources. Five loaves and two fish. And then someone comes up with a genius idea. Well look, we could go and buy more food.

[26 : 40] Look, we could buy enough food to feed this crowd. But then suddenly the mathematics of it all strikes home. There's 5,000 men. Imagine the amount of money you'd need to buy food for that many people.

Imagine even trying to find a shop that was open that would sell enough food to feed 5,000 people in the wilderness. So Jesus intervenes.

He says, look, have them sit down in groups of 50. And they did so in taking the loaves and the fish. Jesus gives thanks to God, blesses them, breaks them, and gives them to the people.

And everyone was satisfied. Everyone had their food. Everyone went away with their tummies full. And 12 baskets full of broken pieces were picked up as well.

But what does this have to do with us this morning? What does this, how does this impact our lives this morning? Well, firstly, it reminds us of the resources that are ours as Christians.

[27 : 46] You see, the disciples couldn't feed this crowd on their own. The disciples' resources were clearly inadequate for the task that was in front of them. However, they had Jesus.

And Jesus could take their meager resources. Jesus could take their meager rations and turn it into enough to feed a crowd of 5,000 people. Our resources to meet the needs of the town around us are clearly inadequate.

The manpower we have, the, the, the, perhaps age profile of the congregation, all of these things say to us that the resources we have are inadequate to meet the needs of the town around us.

But yet, when we bring those resources to the Lord, when we use those resources with a humble and willing spirit, when we commit those resources to the God of the universe, when we step out in faith and prayer, the resources at our disposal are infinite.

The cattle on a thousand hills belong to the Lord. our resources in and of ourselves are inadequate, but our resources meager as they are used mightily by the hand of God, then there's nothing that can stand against it.

[29 : 11] But secondly though, and with this we'll close, secondly though, Jesus is reminding us here of the great truth that He is the bread of life.

You see, let's think about those 5,000 men. Let's think about those 5,000 men who had their fill of bread and fish that day. What happened to them? Well, they got up the next morning and they were looking for breakfast.

They got up the next morning no doubt grateful for the meal that they'd enjoyed the night before, but they were hungry again. Yet all who truly come to Christ would never hunger or thirst.

so come to Him this morning. Reach out to Him by faith. Who is this Herod? Well, He is the Savior from sin.

He is the one who can quench your spiritual hunger and thirst this morning. Come to Him. Reach out by faith. And have your thirst and hunger satisfied by the only one who can.

[30 : 21] Amen. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.