

PM Luke 9:21-56

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Preacher: Rev Duncan Peters

[0 : 00] I'd like us to read together from the Holy Bible, from the Gospel according to Luke, and chapter 9. That's on page 1044 of the Church Bible.

Well, let's read from verse 20 of Luke, chapter 9, where Jesus asks his disciples, Who do you say that I am? And Peter answered, The Christ of God.

And he strictly charged and commanded them to tell this to no one, saying, The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.

And he said to all, If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.

For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself? For whoever is ashamed of me and my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory, and the glory of the Father, and of the holy angels.

[1 : 43] But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God. Now about eight days after these sayings, he took with him Peter, and John, and James, and went up on the mountain to pray.

And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white. And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory, and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep. But when they became fully awake, they saw his glory, and the two men who stood with him.

And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah, not knowing what he said.

As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them. And they were afraid as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud saying, This is my son, my chosen one.

[3 : 13] Listen to him. And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.

On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. And behold, a man from the crowd cried out, Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child.

And behold, a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly cries out. It convulses him so that he foams at the mouth, and shatters him, and will hardly leave him.

And I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not. Jesus answered, O faithless and twisted generation, How long am I to be with you, and bear with you?

Bring your son here. While he was coming, the demon threw him to the ground and convulsed him. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the boy, and gave him back to his father.

[4 : 23] And all were astonished at the majesty of God. And while they were all marbling at everything he was doing, Jesus said to his disciples, Let these words sink into your ears.

The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men. But they did not understand this saying, and it was concealed from them, so that they might not perceive it.

And they were afraid to ask him about this saying. An argument arose amongst them as to which of them was the greatest.

But Jesus, knowing the reasoning of their hearts, took a child and put him by his side, and said to them, Whoever receives this child in my name, receives me.

And whoever receives me, receives the one who sent me. For he who is least among you all, is the one who is great. John answered, Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he does not follow with us.

[5 : 36] But Jesus said to him, Do not stop him, for the one who is not against you, is for you. When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.

And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him. But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem.

And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven, and consume them? But he turned and rebuked them, and they went on to another village.

May God bless to us that reading of his word. Let's join together again in prayer. Let's turn back to Luke chapter 9, and we're looking especially this evening at verses 51 to 56.

Many of the greatest stories involve an epic journey. In ancient times, Homer's odyssey involved a ten-year journey from Troy to Ithaca, the hero of that story.

[7 : 02] J.R.R. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings involved a lot, well, the whole book really involves a long journey to Mount Doom. And then there are historical accounts of travellers, such as Marco Polo and Ibn Battuta, who travelled vast distances in the Middle Ages.

And of course, the Bible contains journey narratives. We think of Abraham's call to leave his home in Ur, to go to the promised land, the land of Canaan. And then likewise of the Israelites, to leave Israel, and that long journey through the wilderness to the promised land.

But the most epic journey of all is recorded by Luke, and it's the journey of the Lord Jesus to Jerusalem. And it begins in verse 51.

We read that when the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. Now this is the start of a new section of Luke's Gospel.

Luke, of course, starts the first two chapters, deal with the birth and childhood of John the Baptist and of Jesus. And then the following chapters up to this point are mainly around Galilee.

[8 : 28] One or two ventures outside, but that's where most of the action takes place. But then from this verse, chapter 9, verse 51, we have this journey.

Jesus sets his face. He resolutely sets out to go to Jerusalem. And all through the middle section of Luke, right to chapter 19, verse 44, when Jesus actually arrives in Jerusalem, Jesus is on this journey.

And frequently Luke will say things like, you know, Jesus passed on. He travelled on to the next place. Or as he went along the road. So all through this section, he's on this journey, this long journey that will end in Jerusalem.

And this verse tells us of the purpose of the journey. When the days drew near for him to be taken up. And the destination of that journey is not ultimately Jerusalem, it is ultimately heaven.

But it is via the cross and resurrection. And then he will be taken up to the right hand of God in heaven. And there is also a fixed time when the days drew near.

[9 : 46] So God has appointed a time for this to happen. And Jesus knew that this was approaching. We read in verse 22. Two, Jesus tells his disciples, the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

And then in the account of the transfiguration, that's from verse 28 to 36. In that account on the mountaintop, we read of two men, two historical figures from many centuries earlier in the Israelites' history, Moses and Elijah.

And they appear there with Jesus on that mountaintop. And they have a conversation. And Luke tells us what the conversation is about. In verse 30, we're told, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of Jesus' departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

And his departure, that is another way of speaking of his death. The word in the original is actually Jesus' exodus. Which, of course, has echoes of the original exodus at the time of Moses, where the Israelites were redeemed from Egypt.

But that was the conversation between Moses, Elijah and Jesus on that mountaintop. And so with that in his mind, Jesus, we're told in verse 51, he sets his face to go to Jerusalem.

[11 : 34] He resolutely set out for Jerusalem. And it was a journey that required great resolution, great determination, great courage, because of what faced him there, because of the horror of what would happen to Jesus there, where he would suffer rejection, and beating and torture, and would be crucified.

He would die on a cross. And there on that cross, he would bear the sins of the world. It was also a lonely journey that he sets out on.

Of course, his disciples are with him, they're following him, but there's an isolation about Jesus, because his disciples just don't understand. We've read that. They don't understand what's going on.

When Jesus tells them that he's going to suffer and die, it's closed from their minds, and they don't even want to ask him about it. Or maybe today, you are dreading something.

Maybe it might be a hospital appointment, it might be a situation in your work, or in your family, or just some other situation in your life, and it fills your horizon, and you dread it.

[12 : 54] Well, here we see that Jesus Christ sympathizes with you. He knows what it's like, because he has been there, and he has had a prospect far worse than the one that you may face.

And also, in our situation, often we fear things. I'm sure you can think of times when you've looked ahead at something with great fear, you're really apprehensive about it, and then the things happen, and it wasn't half as bad as you expected.

Well, that's not the case for Jesus here. He's looking ahead to Jerusalem, what's going to happen there. And it's going to be every bit as bad as what he fears, and perhaps even worse.

Perhaps at this stage, he doesn't fully appreciate the horror. I'm sure he has much insight into it, but perhaps it's at Gethsemane where the horror of it really comes and confronts him.

So if you're in that situation, Jesus Christ can, he does sympathize with you, and you can take your concerns to one who sympathizes with you in that situation.

[14 : 10] So this journey requires immense resolution from Jesus. And it's a resolution that is tested almost immediately from two directions.

And we can see one from the church and one from the world. So it comes from the world, first of all, because they're journeying through Samaria.

Now that was unusual because Jews very often avoided Samaria. They go on a longer journey and skirt around the border of Samaria. But Jesus and his disciples, they go through Samaria and they enter a village.

And he sends messengers ahead to make preparations to find a place for hospitality. And the Samaritans don't want him. They reject him. Now, the reason for that is we were looking at this this morning.

For those of you who weren't here, Samaria, the Samaritans were, as they lived in this neighboring province of Samaria. And their history dated back to 722 BC when the northern kingdom of Israel were invaded and conquered by the Assyrian Empire.

[15 : 32] And the inhabitants, or many of the inhabitants, were deported and resettled in other parts of the empire. And the Assyrians took people from those other parts and settled them in Samaria.

And so, the Jews regarded these neighbors as both racially and religiously mixed and impure. Now, by the first century, by the time that this is happening, the Samaritans had become monotheistic. That means they believed in the one God. And they accepted the first five books of the Old Testament, the books of Moses, but not the rest. So they didn't accept Jerusalem as the place of worship.

They didn't accept the temple or anything to do with the temple in Jerusalem. Because that had sort of developed after the books and the time of Moses.

And as we saw this morning, Jews despised Samaritans. They hated them. But as we also saw, Jesus had a different attitude.

[16 : 42] We noted that in John 4, where Jesus preaches in Sychar, where he meets the woman at the well. And he goes to that village or town and he spends some time with them and preaches.

And many believe in him there. And also, in the next chapter of Luke, in chapter 10, Jesus tells that story of the good Samaritan, one of his most famous parables.

And the hero of the story is a Samaritan. And we perhaps see something of the grace of the Lord Jesus in that. Because here in chapter 9, he's being rejected, not welcomed by these Samaritans.

And yet, he doesn't sort of tar all Samaritans with the same brush. He tells a story in which the Samaritan is a hero. So these Samaritans, they don't welcome Jesus and his disciples because they're going to Jerusalem.

We're told that there. Partly because Samaritans didn't accept the Jerusalem temple and because of this animosity, this hostility between the two groups.

[17:50] So, their opposition is not directly a rejection of Jesus as the Messiah. It's rather just a rejection of them as Jews because of their ethnic, religious background.

Of course, that doesn't excuse their hostility. But it maybe helps us to understand it. But then, so there's rejection by Samaritans, rejection by the world, the outside world.

But Jesus also faces trouble from the church, from his disciples. And Jesus' resolution is tested severely by these disciples who have a very different vision of God's reign, God's kingdom, and what it should look like.

And the kind of thing that God's Messiah should do. And again, you may find church life difficult at times.

I think we probably all do. You might find that you're trying to rub along with people who have a very different outlook from yourself, a different vision for the direction the church should go in. Well, Jesus also sympathizes with that because he was with these disciples who had a very different outlook, a very different vision of what his mission should look like.

[19:10] Now, of course, we have to remember that we may be wrong in our vision, in our strategy, in what we think the direction the church should be.

Jesus, of course, was not wrong. But Jesus knew that frustration of being misunderstood and of people with a very different view and vision from himself.

So, in verse 54, the disciples, James and John, when they see this rejection, this lack of welcome from the Samaritans, they say, Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?

Now, James and John here, they are basically, they're sharing the common Jewish attitude towards Samaritans, that hostility towards them.

and here, it sort of shows itself as a desire for revenge. These people have spurned us, we want to take revenge on them, we want immediate judgment to fall on them, and we want to vindicate Jesus' honour and maybe also our own honour as well.

[20:25] And there may be an element of sort of racial, well, racial hatred, but also just discrimination here.

Because James and John, at the beginning of this chapter, Luke chapter 9, in at the beginning of the chapter, Jesus sends out the twelve on a mission to go out preaching.

And he tells them what to do when they are rejected. This is in verse 5. Wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town, shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them.

And there's no evidence of James or John or any of the other disciples wanting to go further than that and call down judgment on those Jewish towns who rejected Jesus and Jesus' disciples.

And yet, when it comes to Samaritans, they see the same behavior that rejecting Jesus and the disciples in a much more severe light and want to call down judgment upon them.

[21:34] Well, what seems to be in James and John's mind here is a passage from the Old Testament from 2 Kings chapter 1. And Elijah is the prophet who is in mind.

Now, Elijah features in this chapter of Luke. In verse 8, when people are asking, you know, who is this Jesus who's doing all these remarkable things?

Some say that he's Elijah. Come back from the, come back. Now, I don't think James and John thought that Jesus was literally Elijah, but maybe they think of him as an Elijah-like figure.

And of course, James and John, along with Peter, had been on the mountaintop where Moses and Elijah had appeared and talked with Jesus. So, you know, Elijah's fresh in their mind, although it seems they have forgotten the conversation that Moses, Elijah, and Jesus had had about Jesus' departure in Jerusalem, his death there.

The passage is in 2 Kings chapter 1. And we'll take up the reading there in verse 9.

[23:04] So, Elijah has sent a message to the king. Well, the king asked for the message, but Elijah has said that the king Ahaziah will die. And then in verse 9, the king Ahaziah sent to Elijah a captain of 50 men with his 50.

He went up to Elijah, who was sitting on top of a hill, and said to him, O man of God, the king says, come down. But Elijah answered the captain of 50, if I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your 50.

Then fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his 50. Again, the king sent to him another captain of 50 men with his 50.

And he answered and said to him, O man of God, this is the king's order, come down quickly. But Elijah answered them, if I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your 50.

And the fire of God came down from heaven and consumed him and his 50. Again, the king sent the captain of a third 50 with his 50. And the third captain of 50 went up and came and fell on his knees before Elijah and treated him.

[24 : 22] O man of God, please let my life and the life of these 50 servants of yours be precious in your sight. Behold, fire came down from heaven and consumed the two former captains of 50 men with their 50s.

But now let my life be precious in your sight. The angel of the Lord said to Elijah, go down with him and do not be afraid of him. So that passage seems to be in mind, in the mind of James and John when they're talking about calling fire from heaven to consume this Samaritan village.

At the beginning of chapter 9, Jesus had given James and John along with the other disciples, the rest of the twelve, power and authority to drive out demons and to cure diseases.

But it seems James and John are impatient. Jesus is the Messiah, they recognize that, he is the long expected king who has come to rescue his people from their pagan enemies.

And healing people is all well and good, but surely it's time for a display of power against their enemies. Now this section in Luke, follows a whole section of failures of the disciples.

[25 : 46] That's the kind of theme that runs through after the transfiguration narrative. So in verses 37 to 43, we see the disciples' failure to drive out a demon.

And then in verse 43 to 45, there's a failure of understanding to understand Jesus' mission. And they're just afraid to ask him about it. And then in verses 46 to 48, there's a failure of humility.

They're arguing with each other about who is the greatest among them. And then in verses 49 to 50, there's a failure of a kind of right form of inclusiveness.

Somebody else is driving out demons in Jesus' name, and John wants to stop him. But Jesus says, do not stop him, for the one who is not against you is for you.

And now again, James and John exhibit failure. A failure in forbearance, a failure in understanding Jesus' mission of grace.

[26 : 52] And so in verse 55, Jesus turns and rebukes James and John. And Luke is here presenting a contrast between Jesus and Elijah.

In some ways, Jesus is an Elijah-like prophet, but there is also a great contrast here. At one level, one of the reasons for that may be that Elijah's opponents were Israelites.

They were people who should have known better, those who were coming to arrest and harm Elijah. But another, and I think probably more prominent reason, is that with Jesus coming, and the coming of the kingdom of God, there is now a new age that has dawned.

And in this new age, persecution of idolatry and heresy and opposition to God is no longer the way of operating.

That belonged to the formative age, the age of the old covenant, and was probably God's accommodation to the weakness of the Israelites.

[28 : 03] Now, you may wonder, what does that mean, God's accommodation? And it is, in some ways, it's the realism of God, dealing with the hardness and sinfulness of human beings.

One theologian who spoke a lot about this was John Calvin. And an example of this would be divorce and polygamy, both of which were allowed in the law of Moses, but which Jesus makes very clear, was not part of God's original design for marriage.

Jesus teaches that God's original plan and design and intention for marriage was a permanent relationship between one man and only one woman.

And yet, the law of Moses allowed both divorce and polygamy. And in fact, Jesus says in Mark chapter 10 that Moses allowed that because of the hardness of your hearts.

But that was not God's intention from the beginning. And I think because divorce and polygamy were so widespread, so deeply ingrained in the culture, the wider culture of that time, and also

among the Israelites, that it was just unrealistic to ditch that.

[29 : 22] And so God accommodates that. But he makes it clear that that is not his best will for human beings. And I think that is also true of the way the Old Testament idolatry is to be punished by death.

And that was because of the weakness of the Israelites, because if that was not the case, they would drift into idolatry, which of course they do very often anyway. Perhaps we can use the example of a child.

A toddler needs to be kept on a tight rein. So, for example, when you're crossing a road, you say, hold on to my hand and don't let go. A 15-year-old doesn't need that.

They're allowed a bit more freedom. And so we can view Old Testament Israel as being like an earlier childhood phase of the people of God. And of course they didn't have the benefits of the revelation that we have in the New Testament.

But now with the coming of Jesus, there is a new age and a new way of doing things, a new plan of action, a new mission, that turns its back on using force and compulsion to compel people to godliness.

[30 : 41] Now today we live in a world where there's much religious persecution and violence. We can think of notorious organizations like ISIS or Daesh or Al-Qaeda or the Taliban or Hindu extremists in India or Buddhist extremists in Sri Lanka and Myanmar or Zionist fundamentalists who want to just ethnically cleanse Palestine.

And of course Christians have at times had an appalling record of persecuting others and violence against others. And of course atheists can't afford to be smug because many atheist regimes have had horrendous records of violence against those who oppose them.

But often there are conflicts over which religion, which ideology has supremacy and rule or sometimes over a perceived insult. But whatever the cause is and of course that can sometimes be complicated, religious violence can be complicated.

Jesus rejects the path of violence, of enforcing godliness and meeting out punishment against those who insult and reject him.

The kingdom of God is not advanced by violence against enemies but by enduring rejection and suffering and by ultimately Jesus going to the cross where he would face all the brutality and hostility that the human race could muster up.

[32 : 31] Now of course there is a future judgment when God will judge the world with absolute justice and when God will judge those who continue to reject him.

But that is God's work, it is not our work. Now is the time of God's patience. It is the time when God calls all people to repent.

As 2 Peter 3 verse 9 says that God is patient with you not wanting anyone to perish but everyone to come to repentance. And Jesus in lying with that taught in the sermon on the plain in Luke 6 verse 27 he says to you who are listening I say love your enemies do good to those who hate you bless those who curse you pray for those who ill treat you to the one who strikes you on the cheek offer the other cheek.

Now Jesus had all the resources at his command to utterly annihilate all opposition against him in Matthew 26 verse 52 when one of his disciples Peter tries to defend him against being arrested Jesus commands him put your sword back in its place for all who draw the sword will die by the sword do you think I cannot call on my father and he will at once put at my disposal more than 12 legions of angels but how then would the scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen this way 12 legions of angels is a massive destructive fighting force of about 72,000 powerful angels who could with no trouble obliterate all opposition and yet Jesus doesn't call for that because that was not his mission his mission is to fulfill the scriptures and the scriptures declare his mission to be the suffering servant the one who

Isaiah speaks about as the one who is despised and rejected by mankind a man of suffering and familiar with pain surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering yet we considered him punished by God stricken by him and afflicted but he was pierced for our transgressions he was crushed for our iniquities the punishment that brought us peace was on him and by his wounds we are healed he was oppressed and afflicted yet he did not open his mouth he was led like a lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before its shearers is silent so he did not open his mouth by oppression and judgment he was taken away he was assigned a grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death though he had done no violence nor was any deceit in his mouth and yet as the scriptures

say as that passage goes on to say his destiny was ultimately victory and honour and kingship as that passage goes on to say after he has suffered he will see the light of life and be satisfied by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many and he will bear their iniquities

[35 : 58] Jesus goes to Jerusalem he goes on that journey all the way to Jerusalem and there he suffers and faces the rejection and the hatred and the bile of humankind and he dies on that cross bearing our sins but God vindicated him by raising him from the dead and raising him lifting him to heaven where he has all rule all authority in heaven and on earth over all nations that belongs to Jesus Christ this morning we looked at the kind of longer term outcome for the Samaritans how Philip in Acts chapter 8 went there and preached the gospel and how many believed in the Lord Jesus Christ but just in closing a question for us is how do we how can we today promote the honour of Jesus

Christ how do we defend the honour of Jesus Christ well here from this passage we see that it's not by trying to grab power so that we can suppress and punish opposition and heresy and criticism and unbelief and mockery and blasphemy by the use of force and violence rather we promote and defend the honour of Jesus Christ by loving our enemies by seeking to persuade them but not to compel them of their need of Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour and we promote and defend the honour of Jesus Christ by living lives that honour him by the quality of those lives lives that are filled with love and grace and compassion the fruit of the spirit love joy peace forbearance kindness goodness faithfulness gentleness and self control may God enable us to live such lives Amen for a