

Preach the Kingdom of God

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[0 : 00] Let's turn again to the second part of the word we read in Luke's Gospel, Luke chapter 9. I want us just to look at these verses 1 to 9.

I'm not going to read them, I'm going to read them. We'll read the first two verses. 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. Now this, as we go through the Gospel of Luke, it brings us to focus upon the Lord and the life of the Lord in all its various aspects. We've seen him as a baby. We've seen him as a child. We've seen him growing up into manhood. We've seen him baptized. We've seen him tempted. We've seen him as a great teacher, the great preacher, the great healer, the great miracle worker, even to the point where he is raised from the dead.

We've seen him as a great teacher. We've seen him as a great teacher. But we've seen him very clearly as man of very man.

[1 : 23] And I think one of the ways that's so fascinating through Luke, when we go through the Gospel of Luke, is that Luke has a tremendous interest in people. He was a doctor.

and so he seems to highlight more than the other gospel writers Jesus' personal dealings with people and we see just the tremendous tenderness and the tremendous compassion that Jesus has as he deals with people day by day and it's one of the things that really Luke focuses upon and it's because each of the gospel writers deals with the same things but in different ways and of course the great work of the Lord Jesus Christ in coming into this world was, I suppose you could sum it up we find it in Luke's gospel to seek and to save that which was lost and that's what Jesus is doing still doing it today he's seeking, seeking out and saving those who are lost bringing them into the light into the hope and into the safety of the kingdom now chapter 9 introduces us to a certain extent to a new part or a new aspect of Christ's ministry because up until now and in chapter 9 but we find later on a slight change

Jesus' focus has been in Galilee and he has been ministering in Galilee all the time but we find that in later on in verse 51 it tells us here but when the days drew near for him to be taken up he set his face to go to Jerusalem so this is a change up until this point his ministry has been localized throughout the towns and villages in this whole area this northern area of Galilee but now we find that the reason for Jesus' coming into this world of course was ultimately to come as a way of the sacrifice to come as a sacrifice for sin and of course the climax of all this was his death upon the cross in on Calvary's hill and of course his subsequent resurrection and that is the great gospel that we preach that Jesus Christ came to die for our sins that's why he came so up until this verse up until chapter 9 verse 51 the focus has been purely or mainly upon his ministry here in Galilee but he's coming to the end of this particular ministry here and he's going to move on it's going to be a slow movement up to Jerusalem but he as it were he's setting his face to go to Jerusalem and so I think we've got to keep that in mind when we look at this particular section here today because it's as if Jesus is making a final concentrated effort on reaching all the areas round about in Galilee he has been ministering personally to these towns and to these villages but now he's going to leave there and he's going to work his way slowly up towards Jerusalem and so it's like a final farewell before he goes and rather than just himself trying to do a last minute and remember he's just he's as it were going on foot so it's going to take time he sends out the twelve and he sends them out to go into all these towns and into these villages and it's like here we are here's the a last sort of attempt at bringing the gospel in its power and in its authority to bear into their lives and so he gives them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and we must never ever lose sight of the importance of preaching sometimes because if you've grown up here and I would imagine that the vast majority of people

here today have grown up attending church and I've sat under the word and sometimes we can become so used to it that and even if you just come to church out of habit let me say this it's a good habit in fact you cannot have a better habit than coming to church and beginning the week in this way even if you haven't come to a saving faith in Jesus Christ even if you haven't come to a personal knowledge of Christ as your saviour it is still the greatest way to start the week because you come to the place where a new opportunity is given to meet with Jesus there is a blessing in coming to God's house be persuaded of that there is a blessing in coming under the word there is a blessing a blessing upon your own soul in being here today wherever the word is proclaimed so every time

we come to read the word and to preach the word we come to the place of opportunity because faith saving faith comes by hearing by hearing the word and that is why many people as they've gone over through their lives they come to a place on a point where the Lord opens their ears to hear in a way they've never heard before and quite often you will hear people say you know I don't know what's happening in church but all of a sudden it's becoming interesting all of a sudden things are making sense but the thing is nothing in a sense has changed the format is still the same the preaching really is still the same but it's God who has begun to work in a person's heart and I'm sure many many many people in here today will testify of that very thing happening in their own experience where all of a sudden things begin to change regarding their own hearing and there's a growing interest they're no longer coming into church simply out of duty or out of habit there is a desire to go there because there's a relevance and there's a meaning and that is because God has started or God is working in your heart

God is speaking to you through the word so it's so important to come under the preaching of the word and it's very clear from God's word even although people today may think preaching has passed its sell by date and many people think today that preaching is foolish the Bible tells us that there are many people who think that but God in his own wisdom this is what he has planned and purposed and said for us that it is through what he even terms the Bible terms the foolishness of preaching so to many people it appears foolish many people would say this is absurd and yet this is the very means that God has used to bring people into faith with himself very often it is under the word well it's always under the word one way or another but so often even in church a passion is awakened a passion is convicted a passion comes to faith or a passion begins to seek the Lord and again it's under the word as we come to

[9 : 31] God's word week by week that hopefully people are strengthened in their faith encouraged in their faith because you know sometimes when we come we can be down we can feel despondent we can sometimes feel it hard going and sometimes we come and it might be in the singing or something but in the word somewhere God brings just something and you say to yourself you know I needed that you see it's personal and God deals personally with us and Jesus knew the reality the relevance of preaching and proclaiming the kingdom and so he's sending his apostles his disciples out to go and proclaim the word throughout all these towns and all these villages again it is often through the preaching of the word the proclaiming of the word that people are inspired to go and witness to other people sometimes as you come under the word your own soul is revived in such a way that you want to tell others and you say to the Lord

Lord give me an opportunity to tell somebody because it can often be very difficult some people have great gifts and great abilities to share the gospel with other people some people there are some people who have no they have no knowledge of what it is really to be shy there are people who they can just go anywhere and talk to anybody but most people aren't like that and they can often find it very difficult to speak to other people about the gospel and I think what is so important in these things is to take the opportunities that God gives us because God does give us opportunities and ask every day Lord give me the opportunity to speak to people I work with because often other people will ask you questions and it's a great thing when a question is asked what do you think about that you go to church why do you believe these things these are golden opportunities and so often people ask these sort of things if you come to faith in Jesus Christ it's amazing many people will ask you what happened well you can't get a better opportunity there's somebody at work who's asked you really give me your testimony what an opportunity

I know these things happen because people people are curious it's not that you're going and trying to ram something down their throat but they they open the door and that's what we need is to have an awareness from the Lord that sensitivity to seize these opportunities and use them for the Lord

and so it's often as we come under the word on a Sunday and our souls are encouraged like this that we are then in turn able to go out and tell others again it's often through the preaching that a person is challenged to go into the ministry or into the mission field which in turn turns in turn they will be used to lead others to Jesus Christ and of course as we know the ministry is a calling it's not that somebody will just one day sit under the word and say oh you know this I think I wouldn't I wouldn't mind having a go at that I wouldn't mind having a go in the pulpit seeing what it's like that's not the way it works it's a it's a calling and there are many people within the Christian church many people with great abilities and great qualities who never feel called to go and proclaim and teach and preach the word of God but when God does call someone it will be through the Holy Spirit influencing drawing impressing upon them through the word the word and spirit will always work together never against one another and then as the word and spirit work together then the providence will open the doors the three things will work together anyway the Lord Jesus sends out his disciples here these twelve he called the twelve together and gave them we notice he gave them power and authority it wasn't something that they had in themselves they weren't able to work it up and say right here we go and we try and do we'll have to just do our best he gave them power and he gave them authority authority is the right to do it in other words supposing you went to Buckingham Palace and you said I've never been to Buckingham Palace I know but supposing you went to the gates and you said look I really need to see the queen no you probably would say away you go but just supposing you went there and the person said okay I have the authority to take you in all of a sudden this person who has the authority says to you you go in because I have the authority to do so and nobody can stop you Jesus is saying to these disciples I am giving you the authority and I am also giving you the power that that is the ability to accomplish the task on hand so Jesus is giving them the right to do it and he is giving them the ability to do it and so they are to go and he gives them a definite ministry to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal you was not about themselves their message was not what took their fancy their message was plain and simple it was the kingdom of

[15:38] God and that's what it's to be from the pulpits of our land this is what it's always got to be here is to proclaim the message of the kingdom that is what it is about and again here there was this time of healing and of course there were certain times in the history where God was working where there were great manifestations of healing and certainly here was one of them because it was ushering in the new kingdom now I'm not saying that the Lord of course the Lord heals people and he still heals people and he can heal people miraculously and you know some people say and people get very upset about the whole concept of healing the Lord has certainly provided the means and it is through the means that we look but I would never say to anybody it's wrong to pray that the Lord would heal maybe he won't but maybe he will

I don't agree with all these strange manifestations and things that go on but I do know graciously healed in a wonderful way and so we cannot say that a person cannot be healed the Lord if he wills it he will do so if he doesn't will it it won't happen and I have seen and it can be very distressing I remember years back seeing somebody who was being told that if they had sufficient faith they would be healed this person was a Christian dying and was in the most awful distress as dying because this person believed that she had no faith otherwise she wouldn't be dying she was being told by these people that it was if she had sufficient faith God would heal her Bible doesn't say that anywhere doesn't give us that authority doesn't proclaim that in any way that we will be healed if we have sufficient faith and this poor person was in such distress a good woman because being wrongly advised in this way the

Lord we do not understand or know why the Lord so often takes people away some people are restored some aren't the Lord has his purposes in all these things difficult and although sometimes they are the proof of a person's ministry is by the truth of the word it's always got to be the word that's how you measure the relevance and the truth of or the test of a person's ministry is the truth of this word now some people we're not going through this in detail and we'll have to move on look at this particular passage and they say because Jesus said take nothing no bag no bread no money and do not have two tunics and some people say this passage teaches that all gospel ministry ought to be done purely and simply by faith and people think that that's it and that the system that we have is all wrong and people will say well if you're in this work that's what you do there's the pattern you just go out end of story go by faith well

I was reading recently an American who was writing and this is what he says one of my oldest friends was head of this large independent faith mission one of the largest independent faith missions in the world his group sent out workers with a minimum of training and very very little support believing that if God was calling them then that he would take care of them then he goes on to say often in far away places these missionaries would be found floundering ill without money without any support in some foreign field only to be rescued and helped by missionaries from the mainline churches and organizations who had been sent out with careful training and responsible financial backing

I'm sure we've heard of these kind of stories it's a great thing thinking oh just go by faith and they went and there were casualties not always but so often we are to operate by faith but we are also to use the means that are provided for us again others argue that the workers of the Lord shouldn't be paid that they ought to live by faith and that God will provide but this what Jesus was doing here was at a particular point it was a particular ministry for that particular time because just a little later on in Luke he says to them it's in chapter 22 and he said reminding them of this and he said to them when I sent you out with no money bag or knapsacks or sandals did you lack anything they said nothing he said to them but now let the one who has a money bag take it and likewise a knapsack this you see the

[21 : 35] Lord is saying the time will come when you will operate in a different way but for now and I believe the one thing that Jesus is emphasizing here is the urgency of the mission that they're on this was a mission of great urgency and of great importance the word of God makes it very clear that the laborer is worthy of his hire and the New Testament practice and the way the church was built was in the earlier times and if you look for instance at the life of the apostle Paul Paul was a tent maker by trade and sometimes when he went to a place in order to fund himself it was like and we still use the expression tent making ministries where a person is funding or partially funding themselves by another work as they are also engaged in a ministry maybe in a smaller place but when a church was able to support a pastor then the church was obliged to do that that is the way it doesn't take away from faith it is using the means provided with the faith and that is a way to go forward but

I think the main thing that has been shown here is the absolute urgency of the gospel and we must never lose sight of that fact souls are dying the most precious thing that we have is our never dying immortal soul and it's so easy for the church to be sidetracked and to become involved in 101 different issues and Satan will always tie and bring the church into division why so that people's energies and their time and their abilities are taken up with other issues and with other things and the all important thing is having to be pushed aside and you know you look over the history of the church all the way through and I often wonder what does the Lord actually think when he sees people who were equipped with so many abilities and so many qualities and having to give of their time and their energy and all these things and engaged and involved in things they really shouldn't have to be they're being sidetracked from the main issue which is proclaiming the kingdom of God because souls are dying every single day and souls need to hear this precious gospel that Jesus Christ is the saviour of sinners that is the great mission the great message Jesus is highlighting here the importance and the urgency of it all very briefly as Jesus preached and taught everywhere Herod we see from verses 7 to 9 is perplexed because he's hearing what is happening some are saying John has been raised from the dead others were saying it was Elijah had reappeared and others that one of the prophets of old had risen and Herod says John I beheaded but who is this about whom I hear such things and he sought to see him Jesus' ministry woke the conscience of Herod because Herod we read that in Mark's gospel had beheaded John that was we read the we read the background to it and it was a very difficult moment for Herod because Herod and we're not going to try and in any way commend Herod and make Herod out to be a good man because Herod the Herods were great opponents of the faith and they were wicked people but John the Baptist made a great impression upon the life of Herod and it's very very obvious that Herod often had I would imagine a private consultation with John it tells us that he heard him often and that he even heard him gladly in other words Herod looked forward to going to meet with John and I believe that even in prison when John was imprisoned and John was imprisoned because of Herodias the sake that Herod went to meet I think he had many private consultations with John and he heard him gladly and John influenced Herod I believe for good for times and it was an opportunity for Herod to mend his ways and to get right with

God and I'm sure that there might have been times when John the Baptist thought this would be a major breakthrough if Herod became a believer what a power and what an influence for good he would be he would have so much authority but rather than giving in to the gospel we find that Herod silenced the voice that spoke to him what an opportunity Herod had the Lord had put John the Baptist in his own providence there to be the voice speaking and yet that voice is silenced by the sword it wasn't what Herod had chosen to do or even wanted to do because Herod given his due was distressed at what he had to do but because of the oath that he had made the promise that he had made as Herod his daughter had danced and he had made that oath publicly and she asked for the head of John the Baptist in a platter my friend the voice of conscience is a powerful voice often it lies dead you know we can deaden our conscience we can suppress it so that it doesn't really speak to us at all but every so often the voice of conscience can begin to speak and can speak about things of long ago things that maybe you'd forgotten things you didn't want to remember the voice comes back to haunt you well there's only one thing that can deal with that ultimately and that is the blood of

[28 : 13] Jesus Christ because Jesus is the one who is able to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness and Jesus died to deal with not only the mistakes that we made not only the sin that we've committed but even the guilt that we carry and guilt is an awful thing but Jesus has died to deal with these things my friend make sure that this is how you deal with it by going to the Lord Jesus because be quite persuaded that even although the voice of conscience may not be bothering you today if a person dies without Jesus that voice of conscience will thunder and scream and yell forever and ever it will never go quiet and all these things that were suppressed and forgotten will come back there's only one thing that will ultimately remove that voice and that is as we said the blood of Jesus

Christ you know there was it tells us here that he desired or he sought to see him Herod sought to see Jesus there was actually a day when he did manage to see him people have wanted to see Jesus for different we finish with this for different reasons Simeon remember we saw about Simeon way back when Jesus was a baby Simeon had desired to see Jesus and he held the baby Jesus in his arms and he was so thrilled he said now let your servant depart in peace for mine eyes have seen the salvation of the Lord it was a great moment for Simeon there were Greeks remember that wanted to see Jesus they came to Philip and they said we desire to see Jesus they wanted to see Jesus to hear more of what he had to say and Jesus spoke wonderful things to them Thomas desired to see Jesus remember after the resurrection oh he said that I might see him and then Thomas saw him he couldn't believe initially but then when he saw him he said my Lord and my God lots of people desire to see Jesus for differing reasons well let me say this if your desire today is to see Jesus to see him by faith that's a great desire I would say it's a God given desire and it will not be taken it will be fulfilled it will be fulfilled in your life if that is your real desire but sometimes like Herod I believe it was a wrong desire it was a desire out of maybe a form of curiosity he needed to satisfy what was deep down there he wasn't wanting to see Jesus in order that he might believe in him I think partly he was wanting to make sure this actually wasn't John he was wanting maybe to see him as a miracle man perform for me that's what Herod wanted and you know the day came when

Herod stood face to face with Jesus and you know that day Jesus had nothing for Herod remember what it tells us at the trial of Jesus when he was sent to Herod he answered him not a word not a word because Herod had silenced God's voice earlier on and Jesus now had nothing for Herod how solemn please do not silence God's voice God's word speaking to your heart but today if you hear his voice then harden not your heart but believe let us pray Lord our God we again give thanks for this word we pray that it may penetrate into our heart and mind that we may be encouraged by the Lord of the harvest who is sending out laborers into that harvest proclaiming the great news of Christ as Savior but also a warning to us of how we cannot play with these things and that the Lord who speaks to us is the Lord who is demanding from us a response oh may we not seek to silence God's voice but that we may rejoice in it that we may delight in it and that we want to hear more and more what the Lord will say to us bless us we pray undertake for us and forgive us all our sin in Jesus name we ask it Amen