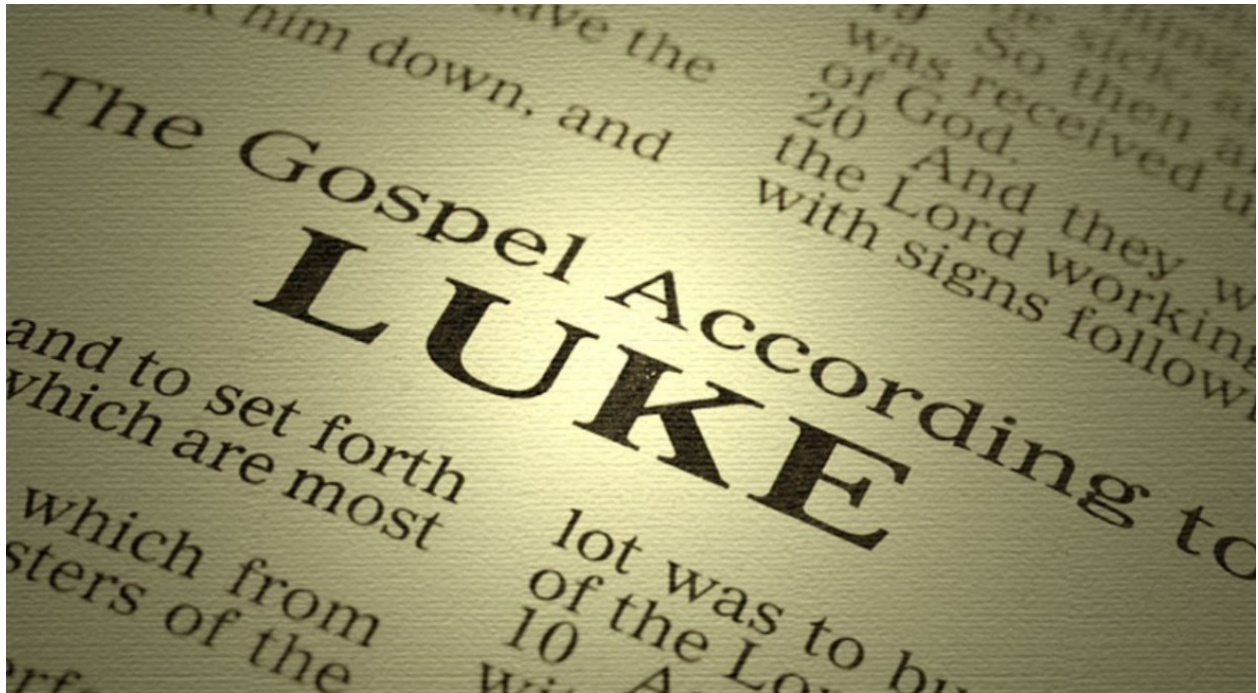


Luke 9, Part 2



T. M. AND SUSIE MOORE

A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

Luke 9, Part 2
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Introduction to Luke 9, Part 2

Jesus has been making the case, in His teaching and by His works, that the Kingdom of God is a most desirable destination. And people were listening. Crowds followed Him everywhere. Disciples abandoned their former lives and committed themselves to Jesus and His program. Even the civil magistrate expressed a desire to meet Him.

The Kingdom is work. Like plowing a field. A person must be fit to plow and work a field. Producing a crop is long, hot, hard, backbreaking, persistent work. If you give up because it's too difficult, it proves you weren't fit for the effort in the first place.

Kingdom fitness must be our first and ongoing concern.

If you find these studies, or any of our other resources, helpful, we hope you will consider making a contribution to help support our work. You can do so by using the donate button at the website or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 360 Zephyr Road, Williston, VT 05495.

We hope you find this study of the gospel of Luke instructive and helpful to equip you for your walk with and work for the Lord. Thank you for joining us.

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1 Whom to Hear

Pray Psalm 27.4-6.

One thing I have desired of the LORD,
That will I seek:
That I may dwell in the house of the LORD
All the days of my life,
To behold the beauty of the LORD,
And to inquire in His temple.
For in the time of trouble
He shall hide me in His pavilion;
In the secret place of His tabernacle
He shall hide me;
He shall set me high upon a rock.
And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me;
Therefore I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tabernacle;
I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the LORD.

Sing Psalm 27.4-6.

(St. Denio: *Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise*)
One thing we request but to dwell with You, Lord,
Your beauty to test and to think on Your Word.
In trouble You hide us secure in Your grace.
No foe may o'erride us: We sing of Your praise!

Read and meditate on Luke 9.28-36.

Preparation

1. What did Jesus talk about with Moses and Elijah?
2. What did the voice say to the disciples?

Meditation

We recall that Jesus had just explained that He was going to suffer, die, and rise from the tomb (vv. 21, 22). Now here, up on the mountain and during a season of prayer, Jesus discussed the same with Moses and Elijah (vv. 29, 30). How were they able to appear to Him? We can't explain that, except that God granted them transport in their spirits to meet with Him in glory.

This conversation shows us two things: (1) The suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus are firmly grounded in the Old Testament. Moses and Elijah represent the entirety of the Old Testament, showing us that part of Scripture is very familiar with everything about Jesus. (2) This subject is drenched in glory. This is because it pleased God to bring Jesus to suffering, that by His stripes and death we might be healed.

Imagine the disciples' surprise, to wake up and see this incredible sight (vv. 32, 33). They longed to remain there in the glory of God (v. 33). But they did not expect a voice to come out of that glory and speak to them. The Father's voice refocused Peter, John, and James on Jesus and reminded them that their calling to glory would only be realized through Him, by hearing and obeying His Word, that is, all of Scripture (vv. 34, 35). The disciples didn't immediately say anything about this episode (v. 36), perhaps because it was simply too wonderful to relate. Glory is like that, yeah it is.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162.

"Who do the crowds say that I am?" (Lk. 9.18)

“But who do you say that I am?” (Lk. 9.20)

The crowds were leaning toward John the Baptist, or an old prophet/lawgiver like Moses (1 Ki. 2.3; Neh. 9.14; Mal. 4.4), or Elijah the quintessential prophet (Mal. 4.5; Lk. 1.17; Jms. 5.17, 18).

In addition to the “glory-drenched” meaning of this experience, it was also an opportunity to confirm and reinforce Peter’s declaration, when he answered Jesus’ query with, “You are the Christ of God” (Lk. 9.20), and to convince John and James of the truth of Peter’s words.

There they were, those three: Jesus, accompanied by two wrongly supposed candidates for who He was: Moses and Elijah (Lk. 9.19). And then, Poof! Two were gone and one was left to bear the Name: “This Is My Beloved Son!” Not Moses, not Elijah, but Jesus, the Christ of God.

Because they were dust (Ps. 103.14), Peter, James, and John fell into sleepiness. But then they woke up and “saw His glory” (Lk. 9.32).

Are we ever “sleepy” about Who Jesus is?

Do we need to wake up to the fact that He is God?

Paul, who was not known to mince words, wrote, “. . .now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly. . .” And “put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts” (Rom. 13.11-14).

Are we awake? Are we awake enough to hear what God said about His Beloved Son, the Christ of God? “Hear Him!” (Lk. 9.35).

And what does Jesus say that we need to hear? “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. . .and see the Kingdom of God” (Lk. 9.23, 27).

*Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.*
(C. T. Studd, 1860-1931)

For reflection

1. What is the glory of God? How did Peter, James, and John experience it? How did Jesus manifest it?
2. With this in mind, what does it mean for you to live for God’s glory?
3. How would you explain to a new believer what God means by saying we should “hear” Jesus?

In our greatest glories on earth, let us remember that in this world we have no continuing city. What need we have to pray to God for quickening grace, to make us lively! Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on Luke 9.28-36*

Pray Psalm 27.7-14.

Pray that the Lord will lead you through this day, teaching and guiding you at every step, guarding and protecting you, and giving you many reasons to praise Him.

Sing Psalm 27.7-14.

(St. Denio: *Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise*)

Hear, Lord, when we cry and be gracious, we pray!

Lord, do not deny us Your favor this day!

Our help, our salvation, though others may fall,

preserve our good station when on You we call.

Lord, teach us; Lord, lead us because of our foes!
Hear, Lord, when we plead for release from their woes.
Had we not believed all Your goodness to see,
our heart sorely grieved and in turmoil would be.

Wait, wait on the Lord; persevere in His grace.
Hold fast to His Word; seek His radiant face.
Be strong, set your heart to abide in His Word;
His grace He imparts; therefore, wait on the Lord.

2 Faithless and Perverse

Pray Psalm 35.1-4.

Plead *my cause*, O LORD, with those who strive with me;
Fight against those who fight against me.
Take hold of shield and buckler,
And stand up for my help.
Also draw out the spear,
And stop those who pursue me.
Say to my soul,
“I *am* your salvation.”
Let those be put to shame and brought to dishonor
Who seek after my life;
Let those be turned back and brought to confusion
Who plot my hurt.

Sing Psalm 35.1-4.

(Creation: *The Spacious Firmament on High*)

Contend, O Lord, with those who strive with me! My shield, my strength and buckler be!
Engage with spear and axe to fight and rescue me with all Your might!
My soul with Your salvation soothe, and vanquish all who oppose Your truth.
Let those ashamed and humbled be who would destroy and humble me.

Read Luke 9.28-42; meditate on verses 37-42.

Preparation

1. What was wrong with this child?
2. How did Jesus respond?

Meditation

Most of this passage is straightforward. A man with a sick and demon-possessed child cried out to Jesus for help, the disciples being unable to heal him (vv. 37-40). Jesus responded by healing the boy (v. 42). The difficult part of this text is verse 41. Jesus speaks to a “faithless and perverse generation”, expressing what sounds like exasperation. The question is, To whom was He speaking?

Many commentators favor the man and the crowd. But the man brought his child to Jesus, first via the disciples in Jesus’ absence, then straight to Jesus as soon as He returned from the mount. That sounds like all the other people of faith Jesus has commended thus far in His ministry. Could He have been speaking to the disciples, chiding them for their inability to heal this child? Yet they apparently did everything they had seen Jesus do and had learned from Him. They acted in faith.

I believe Jesus was speaking to the demon, as if to say, “Are you still hanging around? Didn’t you get the memo about your master’s defeat in the wilderness? Didn’t you hear about the Legion and swine? You truly are faithless and perverse, the whole generation of you. I’m getting tired of having to put up with you. Out with you!”

When we are faithless, when we fail to trust Jesus or to believe and submit to His Word; and when we act in perverse and sinful ways, we have crossed the line into the ranks of the enemy of our soul. At such times, seek the Lord for healing and revival, and be done with those who would destroy your soul.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Without giving too much press time to the enemy, we need to see what was happening with this boy: “As he was still coming [to Jesus], the demon threw him down and convulsed him” (Lk. 9.42).

Isn't that just like him? Always trying to trip people up on their way to new life in Christ. Or a new day with Him. Or perhaps something as simple as a new attitude for the day towards the people in their Personal Mission Field. It might even be as we are coming to a more dedicated and obedient walk with our King. Whatever it is, the devil wants to trip us up, throw us down, convulse us, bruise us, and dissuade us from a closer walk with Jesus.

Our enemy does not wish us well. He is a murderer and the father of lies. Nobody does evil better than he (Jn. 8.44). And so, we are to give him no place in our lives (Eph. 4.27). We must come to our senses and escape the snares that he sets out to trap us in (2 Tim. 2.26). And we must strive to be sober and vigilant because our adversary walks about like a roaring lion, seeking to devour and ruin us (1 Pet. 5.8).

But Jesus, the great Healer and Helper, through His Holy Spirit destroyed, and will continue to destroy the works of the devil (1 Jn. 3.8). And we get to participate in his demise. “Those who forsake the law praise the wicked, but such as keep the law contend with them” (Prov. 28.4). Just by keeping God's Law in our own lives and in our specific Personal Mission Field we fight against evil. We avoid the trips, snares, and bruises.

We must be strong and encourage others as they are “coming to Jesus” to stand firm in their faith; and to be ready for the devil who will want, more than anything, to throw them down and convulse them. Jesus is with us, and with them, to rebuke those “faithless and perverse” demons, to heal us, and to give us safely back to our Father in heaven. Just like Jesus did with this helpless little boy and his dad (Lk. 9.42). Jesus prayed for those of us left in the world, “Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are...Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth...I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me” (Jn. 17.11, 17, 23).

Knowing this gives us the strength to keep coming to Jesus. Daily. For the love, for the work, and for the safety He provides from our ultimately impotent enemy.

For reflection

1. How does the devil try to make you stumble, to bring you down? How do you deal with him at such times?
2. What does it mean to “resist” the devil? What happens if we don't?
3. How can believers help one another to avoid falling into the traps and snares of the devil?

That is to say, perverse, contrary and always bending from the truth, and so obstinate that they could not be persuaded in the truth, nor could they abide or suffer themselves to be taught or persuaded to anything that was profitable for them. Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536), *An Ecclesiasticall Exposition upon Saint Matthewe 17.2*

Pray Psalm 35.33-39.

Pray for the Lord's protection this day against all enemies who seek to undo your soul. Ask Him to fill you with joy and to empower you to bear witness to Him at every opportunity.

Sing Psalm 35.22-28.

(Creation: *The Spacious Firmament on High*)

Stir up, O God, and wake to my right; defend my cause with all Your might!
And judge me in Your righteousness; let not my foes bring me to distress.
Let shame, dishonor be their gown who would Your holy ones bring down.

Luke 9, Part 2

Let all who would themselves exalt be humbled, shamed, and brought to naught.

Let all rejoice triumphantly who would our vindication see.

Let them exalt the Lord above who love the ones that Jesus loves.

And let our tongues declare Your praise, and worship Jesus all our days.

Let those whom You are pleased to bless forever declare Your righteousness!

3 In Perspective

Pray Psalm 55.9-15.

Destroy, O Lord, *and* divide their tongues,
For I have seen violence and strife in the city.
Day and night they go around it on its walls;
Iniquity and trouble *are* also in the midst of it.
Destruction *is* in its midst;
Oppression and deceit do not depart from its streets.
For *it is* not an enemy who reproaches me;
Then I could bear *it*.
Nor *is it* one *who* hates me who has exalted *himself* against me;
Then I could hide from him.
But *it was* you, a man my equal,
My companion and my acquaintance.
We took sweet counsel together,
And walked to the house of God in the throng.
Let death seize them;
Let them go down alive into hell,
For wickedness is in their dwellings *and* among them.

Sing Psalm 55.9-15.

(Bread of Life: *Break Thou the Bread of Life*)
Let judgment fall, O Lord, let violence cease.
Daily they mock Your Word while sins increase.
You were for us betrayed; You bore our grief.
By You was judgment stayed for our relief.

Read Luke 9.28-45; meditate on verses 43-45.

Preparation

1. How would you describe the mood of the people and the disciples?
2. What did Jesus remind them?

Meditation

Some of them had just seen Jesus in His glory. All of them had witnessed yet another miracle by the One Who healed the sick, raised the dead, calmed the sea, cast out demons with a word, and was unstoppable in whatever He chose to do. They saw the people rejoicing and marveling at the majesty of God. They felt a holy momentum growing, and they must have been excited and pleased beyond their wildest dreams.

Everything was going to plan, as the disciples saw it, and victory after victory after miracle after miracle could only mean still greater things were to come.

Well, they were, but this hope needed to be kept in perspective. Before the triumph must come the suffering, as Jesus explained yet again (v. 44). I doubt that the disciples considered even for a moment that the word, “betrayed”, might have some application to them. They “did not understand” what Jesus was saying to them because their preconceived ideas were ruling their affections. They “were afraid to ask Him” about this saying, either for fear of looking stupid or of having their fond hopes shattered.

When Jesus speaks, and whatever Jesus speaks, we need to set aside our preconceived notions about what’s right or true, what we should be thinking or doing, or what we ever have or have not experienced as

Christians. We need to “hear Him” and live from within His perspective on life, not ours.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

All were amazed. Everyone marveled and praised. Elation all around for miracles galore.

But instead of basking in the limelight, Jesus had hard words for His disciples.

Listen up! Let what I’m about to say “sink down into your ears”! (Lk. 9.44) Look at all these people praising Me. But please, make no mistake, I’m “about to be betrayed into the hands of men” (Lk. 9.44). And by the way, you are men, so it might be one of you! Take note.

Luke then takes pains to tell us exactly how clueless the disciples were:

1. They did not understand.
2. It was hidden from them.
3. They did not perceive.
4. They were afraid to ask for clarification. (Lk. 9.45)

They shouldn’t have been afraid, nor should we, to seek clarification and understanding for the words and commands of God. It saves a lot of confusion and may even save a life (Deut. 32.46, 47).

Jesus was about to experience something that, when given a choice, David chose not to do.

David had disobeyed God by numbering the people of Israel and Judah. But then “David’s heart condemned him...so David said to the LORD, ‘I have sinned greatly in what I have done...’” Then the word of the LORD came to Gad the prophet about how this sin was going to be resolved. God said, “I offer you three things; choose one of them for yourself, that I may do it to you.” Here were his choices: 1. Seven years of famine for himself and his land. 2. The opportunity to flee from his pursuing enemies for three months. Or, 3. Three days of plague in the land. And David’s distressed response? “Please let us fall into the hand of the LORD, for His mercies are great; but do not let me fall into the hand of man” (2 Sam. 24.1-14). David preferred not.

Jesus didn’t get a choice. He would fall into the hands of men and of God. For us. And He wanted His disciples to be informed and warned about the future. The future that would make peace with God a possibility for anyone willing to accept the terms of the transaction. “Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows...smitten by God and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed” (Is. 53.4, 5).

Are we listening to what Jesus said?

Do we have a proper perspective on hope?

Are we willing to get clarification and guidance daily from His Word?

We must never be content to lack understanding about the whole truth of what living in the Kingdom of God is all about. Jesus wants His Word to sink down deep into our ears and hearts, so we can “live from within His perspective on life, not ours.” “Your word is truth” (Jn. 17.17).

For reflection

1. What are some things that can keep us from hearing Jesus as He speaks to us in His Word?
2. What can you do to improve your ability to understand what Jesus is saying in His Word?
3. Whom will you encourage today in their walk with and work for the Lord – to hear and understand Him as you are seeking to do?

Luke 9, Part 2

The apostles imagined for themselves pleasant and delightful conditions in the reign of Christ and thought that, as soon as he became known, he would receive the highest approval of everyone. It was unbelievable to them that the priests, scribes and leaders of the church would be against him. Therefore, this error having seized them, they did not admit anything that was contrary to it... John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on a Harmony of the Gospels* 4

Pray Psalm 55.16-23.

Make a point to call upon the Lord in prayer three times today – morning, noon, and evening. Thank Him for His grace and for the peace you know in your soul. Pray that He will guard and protect you against all enemies and adversity, all who deny the Lord and despise His Word. Cast the burdens of your day upon the Lord, and give thanks that He will never fail you nor forsake you.

Sing Psalm 55.16-23.

(Bread of Life: *Break Thou the Bread of Life*)

Lord, I will call on You, answer and save!
Noon, morning, evening too, my voice I raise.
Grant me Your peace, O Lord; answer my foes!
All who reject God's Word He overthrows.

Many assail, O Lord, many betray.
See how they draw their sword across my way.
Take up my burden, Lord; strengthen and bless!
Let judgment by Your Word their souls distress.

4 Greatness as Leastness

Pray Psalm 146.5-7, 10.

Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help,
Whose hope is in the LORD his God,
Who made heaven and earth,
The sea, and all that is in them;
Who keeps truth forever,
Who executes justice for the oppressed,
Who gives food to the hungry.
The LORD gives freedom to the prisoners...
The LORD shall reign forever—
Your God, O Zion, to all generations.
Praise the LORD!

Sing Psalm 146.5-7, 10.

(Hallelujah! What a Savior! *Man of Sorrows*)

Blessed are they whose hope resides in the Lord, Christ at His side.
By Him heav'n and earth abide – God forever reigns in Zion!

He is faithful evermore; He gives justice to the poor,
feeds the hungry from His store – God forever reigns in Zion!

Read Luke 9.28-50; meditate on verses 46-50.

Preparation

1. About what were the disciples disputing?
2. How did Jesus respond to them?

Meditation

These verses show us how easily pride can enter the soul even of those closest to the Lord. “Dispute” is a little too harsh here; “discussion” is more like it. They were casually, perhaps even whimsically, comparing themselves with one another, perhaps to recover some “face” after the failed attempt to heal the little child. We can imagine Peter, James, and John thinking themselves to be head of the class, what with the (wink, wink, but don't tell, v. 36) vision of Jesus in glory still in their minds. And everybody was probably eager to keep Peter from thinking too highly of himself, given Jesus' commendation earlier in the chapter (cf. v. 20, Peter's commendation implied from Matt. 16.17-19).

Then there was John's attempt to shore up the status of the “inner ring” (Lewis) by suggesting a certain person who was not a part of their “group” should not be allowed to act as if he was. John said they told the man (the Greek makes it clear it was a man) to stop casting out demons because he was not one of them (v. 49). He didn't have the right credentials.

In each case, Jesus gently but firmly took aim at the disciples' pride. Greatness is a matter of leastness, He explained (vv. 47, 48), just as He Himself had become least of all people to die for our salvation. Greatness is childlikeness. Don't vaunt yourself. Be humble and unassertive. Obey those who have authority over you. Greatness lies this way.

And as for the “outsider”, Jesus said to leave him alone. He was on Jesus' side as evidenced by the work he was doing and the power he displayed. And the humility: The man did not seek to gain status by pushing for admission to Club Disciples. He just did what he saw Jesus doing to help those in need. That's what Jesus is

looking for in all His followers.

Leastness.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

“For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face.

Now I know in part, but then I shall know
just as I am known” (1 Cor. 13.12).

Fully known by the Lord God. The good stuff and the bad are right on display with Him.

“And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart...” (Lk. 9.47).

“O God, You know my foolishness; and my sins are not hidden from You” (Ps. 69.5).

Nothing about us is hidden from His purview, yet knowing all, He loves us enough to warn us away from sin.

As Solomon prayed, “LORD God...hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and forgive, and act, and give to everyone according to all his ways, whose heart You know (for You alone know the hearts of all the sons of men), that they may fear You all the days that they live in the land which You gave to our fathers” (1 Ki. 8.23, 39, 40). Yes, know and warn us, teach and train us, love and forgive us.

“The Lord knows those who are His” (2 Tim. 2.19); and as the writer of Hebrews notes, “The word of God...is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4.12).

On this occasion, Jesus perceived that the thoughts of His disciples’ hearts needed a quick paradigm shift. He, like God with Cain, was shining a warning light on thoughts that He knew would lead quickly to sin if not checked. “If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it” (Gen. 4.7). Cain didn’t and Abel died.

My heart known, my thoughts perceived, my prayer heard and answered:

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties;
and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Ps. 139.23, 24).

For reflection

1. How can we keep our heart from straying into pride?
2. Today, as you go into your Personal Mission Field, how will you practice Kingdom leastness?
3. It’s good to remember that the Lord always sees our heart. Explain.

Christ brought forward the child as a pattern of simplicity and innocence, and set him by him. He showed him as in an object lesson, that he accepts and loves those who are like the child. He thinks they are worthy of standing at his side, as being like-minded with him and anxious to walk in his steps. Cyril of Alexandria (375-444), Commentary on Luke, Homily 54

Pray Psalm 146.1-4, 10.

Praise Jesus for humbling Himself to come among us, to live, die, and rise again for our salvation. Ask God to make you more like Him – more of a servant, shepherd, witness, and seeker of the lost.

Sing Psalm 146.1-4, 10.

(Hallelujah! What a Savior! *Man of Sorrows*)

Praise the Lord, my soul, give praise! While I live, His Name I’ll raise,
and exalt Him all my days – God forever reigns in Zion!

Luke 9, Part 2

Trust we not in prince or man; no salvation's in their hand;
death shall take them, breath and plans – God forever reigns in Zion!

5 Nosce Teipsum

Pray Psalm 19.12-14.

Who can understand *his* errors?
Cleanse me from secret *faults*.
Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous *sins*;
Let them not have dominion over me.
Then I shall be blameless,
And I shall be innocent of great transgression.
Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
Be acceptable in Your sight,
O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.

Sing Psalm 19.12-14.

(St. Christopher: *Beneath the Cross of Jesus*)
Who, Lord, can know his errors? O keep sin far from me!
Let evil rule not in my soul that I may blameless be.
Oh, let my thoughts, let all my words before Your glorious sight
be pleasing to You, gracious Lord, acceptable and right.

Read Luke 9.27-55; meditate on verses 51-55.

Preparation

1. What did John and James want to do?
2. How did Jesus respond to their question?

Meditation

In his great poem, *Nosce Teipsum* (“know yourself”), John Davies (1569-1626) lamented the fact that the Christians of his day didn’t pay enough attention to their souls, to understand or care for them. As a result, their affections were easily misguided, and their thinking was frequently corrupt. We can’t help others until we first help ourselves to be the kind of people Jesus wants us to be. As he put it,

For how may we to others’ things attaine,
When none of vs his owne soule vnderstands?
For which the Diuell mockes our curious braine,
When, ‘Know thy selfe’ his [Jesus’] oracle commands.

It seems James and John had fallen into this trap. They were ready to blast the Samaritans for not receiving Jesus as He made His way to Jerusalem. They should not have been surprised, given the traditional hostility between Samaritans and Jews. However, since Jesus had been favorably received by the Samaritans not that long ago (cf. Jn. 4), we might understand the brothers’ pique.

But Jesus rebuked them for not knowing their own souls (v. 55). Jesus did not come to destroy people, but to save them. How could these disciples so easily look to Him as a destroyer rather than a Savior? Why was their response not compassion or even pity? They had fallen into the “Diuell’s” trap, and he mocked their “curious” thinking.

The way to know yourself is to live always in the Presence of the Lord and His Word, listening for the Spirit to convict, confirm, illuminate, direct, and fill us, that our spirit might be one with Jesus (Ps. 139.23, 24).

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

We are to be as dedicated as Jesus was to His calling, in our Personal Mission Field—to currently do the work and to finish well when it is over. Jesus, knowing full well His end and the horrendous way He would reach it “steadfastly set His face to go” (Lk. 9.51).

Fight or flight? We might, if given the information about our own deaths, turn aside a bit or go in the opposite direction, like Jonah. “Arise, go to Nineveh...and cry out against it...But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish” (Jon. 1.2, 3).

Jesus, on the other hand, steadfastly set His mind and strength to go in the direction of danger, because He had set His heart on following God’s decrees to the very end (Ps. 119.112). He determined to head that way for “the joy that was set before Him”; to endure the cross with the goal of sitting down “at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12.2). He knew what God required of Him and He never questioned His wisdom or authority. He just did what He had been called to do. “Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour” (Jn. 12.27).

Jesus knew Himself and He knew His purpose.

We, too, should know ourselves in the light of God’s truth; and knowing that, work our calling and know our purpose. Paul made our purpose and calling clear: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Rom. 12.1, 2). The proof is not in the pudding, but in the purpose of living in the will of God. Holy and acceptable lives are the reasonable response to thank, honor, and glorify Jesus, for determinedly setting His face to die for our sins.

Know yourself. Repent yourself. Work yourself to accomplish the purpose for which you were called by Christ Jesus (Rom. 8.28), “sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work” (2 Tim. 2.21).

For reflection

1. Why is it important that we understand the thoughts, affections, and priorities of our soul?
2. What can you do to make sure you always “know yourself” as you should?
3. How can you help your fellow believers to keep a close watch on their own souls?

By this reply he not only restrained the unbridled fury of the two disciples, but laid down a rule to all of us not to indulge our temper. For whoever undertakes any thing, ought to be fully aware that he has the authority and guidance of the Spirit of God, and that he is actuated by proper and holy dispositions. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Luke 9.55

Pray Psalm 139.23, 24.

Memorize these verses. Use them first thing each morning, at the end of the day as you retire, and throughout the day. Listen for the Spirit to convict, instruct, and direct you throughout the day.

Sing Psalm 139.23, 24.

(Ripley: *Hallelujah, Praise Jehovah, O My Soul*)

Search my heart, O Lord, and know me, as You only, Lord, can do.
Test my thoughts and contemplations, whether they be vain or true.
Let there be no sin in me, Lord, nothing that Your Spirit grieves.
Lead me in the righteous way, Lord, unto everlasting peace!

6 Fit for the Kingdom?

Pray Psalm 106.1-3.

Praise the LORD!

Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good!

For His mercy endures forever.

Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD?

Who can declare all His praise?

Blessed are those who keep justice,

And he who does righteousness at all times!

Sing Psalm 106.1-3.

(Trust in Jesus: *'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus*)

Praise the Lord! Give thanks and praise Him! He is good, His love endures!

More His works than can be spoken; let His praise be ever sure!

Refrain v. 48

Blessèd be our God and Savior, evermore His praise proclaim!

Let all those who know Your favor praise Your holy, glorious Name!

Read Luke 9.28-62; meditate on verse 57-62.

Preparation

1. What did Jesus say about following Him?

2. Who is not fit for the Kingdom?

Meditation

We note in this passage that to follow Jesus is to be fit for the Kingdom of God. Three people applied to follow Him (vv. 57, 59, 61), and in each case Jesus qualified what that meant. Followers of Jesus Christ must not be dependent on earthly comforts or conditions (v. 58). They must allow nothing to take precedence over following Him (v. 60). They must be ready to announce and explain (Greek: διαγγέλλω, *diangello*) the Kingdom of God (v. 60). And, once they have decided to follow Jesus, they must not veer from that path or long for their former lives (v. 62).

Such followers of Jesus are “fit” – appropriate, suitable, usable – for the Kingdom. Following Jesus is a Kingdom enterprise. God calls us to His Kingdom and glory (1 Thess. 2.12). Jesus taught us to pray for and seek the Kingdom above all else (Matt. 6.10, 33). Followers of Christ have been “conveyed” by God into Jesus’ Kingdom, where they live as citizens and ambassadors of that realm (Col. 1.13; 2 Cor. 5.20). And those who follow Jesus find that their lives increasingly take on the righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit which are the hallmarks of the Kingdom of God (Rom. 14.17, 18).

Jesus invites us to examine ourselves according to these credentials. Have you made the Kingdom turn into this new and exciting way of life? If dragged into a court and examined by a hostile prosecutor according to these criteria, would you be convicted of being a follower of Jesus? A Kingdom ambassador? A threat to the established regime of lies and deceit? Or would you be dismissed as just another feckless “Christian”?

Fit for the Kingdom?

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Poor Mrs. Lot! She was on her way to a new place and a new life. And then, Boom! Into salt she turned.

Why? Well, because she looked back. Lot and his family were told, “Escape for your life! Do not look behind

you nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed” (Gen. 19.17). “But his wife looked back...and she became a pillar of salt” (Gen. 19.26). What was she looking at? What would she miss about living there?

Jesus, in a later conversation with His disciples, used her as an example of how not to think and be. “Remember Lot’s wife,” He told them (Lk.17.32).

In this passage He is saying the same thing. “No one, putting his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Lk. 9.62). Why would we look back? What would we be looking at? What do we think that we would miss if we wholeheartedly turned to live completely for Jesus in His Kingdom?

Jesus told His disciples, and is telling us, “Follow Me”. Absolutely nothing of a circumstantial nature takes precedence over following Jesus. Nothing. As Paul wrote to Timothy, “I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day” (2 Tim. 1.12). Thus, I will follow Him, my heart set on pilgrimage with Him. “Blessed is the man whose strength is in You, whose heart is set on pilgrimage” (Ps. 84.5). “Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage” (Ps. 119.54). He knew what direction he was headed, and he would never turn back, no matter what. “For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8.38, 39). Nothing would dissuade him from following the Savior of his soul. Nor should we ever let anything dissuade us from following Him.

Jesus, the Word of God, from Whom we shall never turn away. “Fit for the Kingdom.”

*That Word above all earthly powers, no thanks to them, abideth;
The Spirit and the gifts are ours through Him who with us sideth;
Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also;
The body they may kill: God’s truth abideth still;
His Kingdom is forever.
(Martin Luther, 1529)*

For reflection

1. How would you explain to a new believer what it means to be fit for the Kingdom of God?
2. What are some things that can compromise that “fitness”?
3. How can believers encourage one another to improve in Kingdom fitness?

They are said to look back, who become involved in the cares of the world, so as to allow themselves to be withdrawn from the right path; particularly, when they plunge themselves into those employments which disqualify them to follow Christ. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Luke 9.62

Pray Psalm 106.44-48.

Pray for yourself and the believers in your Personal Mission Field, that you would become more Kingdom-minded and devoted to following Jesus in everything.

Sing Psalm 106.44-48.

(Trust in Jesus: *Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus*)

Look upon us, Lord, with favor, see us in our sore distress!

Hear our cries, with love surround us – turn again to heal and bless!

Refrain v. 48

Blessèd be our God and Savior, evermore His praise proclaim!

Luke 9, Part 2

Let all those who know Your favor praise Your holy, glorious Name!

Save us, Lord, from every nation; gather us from all our ways.

And we to Your Name will offer glorious thanks and endless praise!

Refrain

7 Spiritual Fitness

Pray Psalm 119.25-27.

My soul clings to the dust;
Revive me according to Your word.
I have declared my ways, and You answered me;
Teach me Your statutes.
Make me understand the way of Your precepts;
So shall I meditate on Your wonderful works.

Sing Psalm 119.25-27.

(Festal Song: *Rise Up, O Men of God*)

My soul clings to the dust; revive me by Your Word!
My ways I have declared to You; teach me Your statutes, Lord!

Make me to understand Your precepts and Your ways,
as on Your works I meditate with wonder and with praise!

Read Luke 9.1-62; meditate on verse 62.

Preparation

1. Who is “fit” for the Kingdom of God?
2. Who is not?

Meditation

Jesus has been making the case, in His teaching and by His works, that the Kingdom of God is a most desirable destination. And people were listening. Crowds followed Him everywhere. Disciples abandoned their former lives and committed themselves to Jesus and His program. Even the civil magistrate expressed a desire to meet Him.

Our text for today might have startled those who first heard it. After all, He had done nothing to discourage those who saw the Kingdom as desirable. Then, suddenly, Jesus turned three people away and announced in the hearing of all that the Kingdom wasn't a free ride, to be taken up at one's convenience and with all your worldly goods and pleasures in tow.

The Kingdom is work. Like plowing a field. A person must be fit to plow and work a field. Producing a crop is long, hot, hard, backbreaking, persistent work. If you give up because it's too difficult, it proves you weren't fit for the effort in the first place.

Americans are fitness crazy. Fitness clubs, videos, equipment, supplements, programs, and more are available anywhere you live. If Christians were as concerned about the fitness of their souls as many people are for their bodies, the state of the Church in our country would be markedly different. Kingdom fitness is, in the first instance, spiritual fitness. We must feed our soul – heart, mind, and conscience – on the Word of God daily and with the Presence of God in prayer. We will do no good work apart from these disciplines that bring fitness to our soul. If we find such disciplines tedious, or if our approach to them is merely cavalier, we'll hanker for easier ways, thus showing that we aren't fit for the work God has called us to do.

Kingdom fitness begins with soul fitness. And achieving and maintaining a fit soul is everyday work. Put your hand on that plow, friend, and don't look back. You'll bear much fruit if you do.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

To plow without keeping our focus, and our eyes trained straight ahead, can be messy and maybe even dangerous work. How can a straight furrow be plowed if one's attention is on where we've been, not on where we're going? What if a fellow farmer was up ahead and we failed to see them, and an accident occurred? Jesus wants followers who care about their work and about the people in their sphere of life.

We are not alone in our work, and we must be mindful of others as we proceed. We cannot afford to look backward, look away, or be sloppy in our Kingdom work. Too much is at stake.

God desires this focus from us: "My eyes are ever toward the LORD..." (Ps. 25.15). "Wisdom is in the sight of him who has understanding, but the eyes of a fool are on the ends of the earth" (Prov. 17.24).

To keep our eyes on Jesus and to gain understanding will not happen apart from hard-work worship. Daily, stretching the muscles of our mind as we seek Him in His glorious Word. And then talking it through with Him in prayer. Our eyes looking straight ahead, safely plowing the furrows of our Personal Mission Field, looking to Jesus "the author and finisher of our faith..." (Heb. 12.2).

"His face was set for the journey" (Lk.9.53) and for the purpose to which He was called (Jn. 12.27). Jesus expects no less from us, therefore, we must be spiritually fit for the task to which we are called. Because "no one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Lk. 9.62).

And fit is what we want to be!

For reflection

1. What do you look like when you are spiritually fit? How does being spiritually fit affect your attitude toward life? Toward others?
2. What can cause you to become "out of shape" for Kingdom living?
3. What kind of "fitness" course would you advise a new believer to adopt?

... if you are not ready in this way to set out with Christ, if you either pretend to or really have such affection for your former way of life and what you have left at home, to cause you to take off even one day of his service, you are not worthy of the dignity and advantages of a Christian life, are not a competent judge of them and consequently are not fit to be a disciple of Christ. Henry Hammond (1605-1660), Paraphrase on Luke 9.9

Pray Psalm 72.9-20.

What evidence do you see that the Kingdom of God is coming on earth as it is in heaven? Spread all that evidence before the Lord, giving Him abundant thanks and praise. Ask Him to use you in furthering His Kingdom today.

Sing Psalm 119.28-32.

(Festal Song: *Rise Up, O Men of God*)

My soul weighs down with woe, I need Your strength, O Lord!
Remove from me all lying ways; grant me Your holy Word!

I choose the way of truth; Your judgments I proclaim.
Your testimonies I embrace, Lord put me not to shame!

Command my course, O Lord; Your gracious truth impart.
I cling to You and know You will enlarge my seeking heart.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. What does it mean for us to “hear” Jesus?
2. Why was it necessary for Jesus suffer and die?
3. How can you avoid becoming self-vaunting and prideful in your faith?
4. How would you explain to a new believer what it means to be “fit” for the Kingdom?
5. What’s the most important lesson you’ve learned from our study of Luke 9.28-62?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.