

A Study in Luke

Week Sixteen

Luke 9:46-10:20

Day One

46 An argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest. 47 Jesus, knowing their thoughts, took a little child and had him stand beside him. 48 Then he said to them, "Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. For he who is least among you all—he is the greatest."

v. 46 – This was not the last discussion the disciples would have as to which of them was the greatest. It is easy to judge them from the distance of history, but let's try to put ourselves in their place and in the context of Luke 9. The disciples thought that Jesus was going to be a literal king, just like King David was. Therefore they were wondering how He was going to order His royal court—which disciple would have what position. (I would recommend that you go to Matthew 18:1-10 for a much clearer presentation of this incident.)

Plus Peter had been given the keys to the kingdom and Peter, James and John had the privilege of going up to the mount to see Jesus' transfiguration. So armed with the mindset of the day, the disciples began "jockeying for position" to see who would be able to get closest to Jesus based on talent, politics and power.

v. 47 – Jesus didn't have to hear them argue. He knew their hearts. Someone once said that your inner thoughts are on a loudspeaker in God's office and are played for heaven to hear! Jesus had to change their thinking if the disciples were to be useful to the Father, just as Paul wrote to the Roman church:

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will (Rom 12:1-2).

People always ask me how much anyone can change or what part of us God wants to change. I tell them that we must change our attitudes and thinking, but that God isn't as interested in changing our personalities as we may think. Do you agree with this statement?

Jesus urged His disciples to become like children in their attitude and see others as smarter, "bigger," and more important. This was not how important disciples and members of a royal court were used to thinking in Jesus' day, but then again, Jesus was no ordinary king and His kingdom wasn't of this world! Do you have the attitude of a

little child in your work and ministry? If not, then perhaps a change of attitude is in order?

Day Two

49 "Master," said John, "we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we tried to stop him, because he is not one of us." 50 "Do not stop him," Jesus said, "for whoever is not against you is for you." 51 As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. 52 And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; 53 but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. 54 When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?" 55 But Jesus turned and rebuked them, 56 and they went to another village.

vs. 49&50 – It is somehow comforting that nothing has changed in 2,000 years. Jesus and the disciples faced the same challenges then as the Church does today. The disciples didn't trust anyone who wasn't part of their party. Today we don't easily trust anyone who isn't part of our denomination or theological group.

Jesus gave us an important guideline to follow: If someone isn't against you is for you. Simple to hear, but hard to follow. Are you against anyone who isn't against you or your group?

v. 51 – I like the King James Version for this verse: "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." Jesus was determined to do the will of God:

Then I said, "Here I am, I have come — it is written about me in the scroll. I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart" (Psalm 40:7-8).

Even though it cost Him His life, Jesus did the will of God. What are the implications for you and me? Paul gave us the answer:

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! (Philippians 2:5-8).

Do you have this same attitude about the will of God?

v. 52-56 – Samaritans didn't like Jews and the feeling was mutual. The Samaritans "dissed" (that's disrespected for those of you who aren't cool) Jesus, and the disciples wanted to extract a measure of revenge with a token of God's power. They didn't want much – just to call in an "air attack" on the Samaritans in the tradition of the Old Testament prophets.

First Jesus opposed their attempts to stop someone who was doing good in His name just because the man wasn't with them. Then He had to stop them from wiping out a village of Samaritans—all in a day's work for Jesus and the disciples! Is there any ethnic or cultural group that you don't like? Does God want to change your heart toward them so that you reflect not your feelings toward them, but rather God's love for them?

Day Three

57 As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." 58 Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." 59 He said to another man, "Follow me." But the man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." 60 Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God." 61 Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family." 62 Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

vs. 57-58 – I am not sure what this man was trying to say to Jesus, so I must look at Jesus' response to get the idea. Matthew told us that this man was a scribe, one who worked to transcribe copies of the word of God. I think that the man was looking for a "ministry position," just as the other disciples had been when they debated who was the greatest. It was not uncommon for rabbis and teachers to have schools of followers in Jesus' day, and these disciples became known for the teacher they were under. Paul studied under Gamaliel:

Then Paul said: "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. Under Gamaliel I was thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers and was just as zealous for God as any of you are today" (Acts 22:2-3).

But Jesus had no organization that the man could join or follow.

Jesus was remarkably low-profile where ministry was concerned. He had no title, did not recruit people to paid position, did not have a theology school as was the tradition of many teachers of His day, and never spent time refuting or correcting the misconceptions about who He was. What does that tell you about how we do ministry today? What does that tell you about the leaders who must have their title, position and honor or they feel that God Himself is being dishonored is they don't receive their due?

v. 59 – One man wanted to follow Jesus and Jesus seemed to put Him off. Now Jesus commanded someone to follow Him and the man put Jesus off. Imagine that! Jesus commanded someone to follow Him and the man refused, trying to put his family duty ahead of his duty to God. People ask me all the time, "Can you miss your purpose? Can you refuse to fulfill it?" Based on this man's response, I think the answer to those questions is, "Yes!"

v. 60 – Jesus said that there was no higher priority than doing the will of God, no matter what the cost or what family or friends thought of it. This man’s father was probably old and could have lingered for many years. The man was using his father as a means to excuse him from following Jesus. Jesus would have none of it.

vs. 61&62 – This seemed like a reasonable request—to set his household affairs in order. Even Elisha in I Kings 19:20 did this with Elijah and then returned to follow the prophet. But how many times have we seen that Jesus knew the heart and thoughts of the people around Him. He must have known here that this man was too attached to his home and therefore had to break with his home to follow Jesus immediately. There are no rules where Jesus is concerned. This man may have felt he had biblical precedent to put his affairs in order first, but Jesus went right to the heart of the matter and confronted the man’s familial attachment.

Are you saying the right things but putting Jesus off? Have you said, “One day I’ll do this or that?” Well, this may be the day! Don’t examine yourself, but ask God to examine your priorities to see if He truly is first. If He shows you anything that is before Him, then repent and correct the order!

With all three examples in today’s study, it seems that Jesus’ responses didn’t quite match what the people had said to Him. In that case, Jesus’ responses must be seen as insightful and correct. Jesus knows your heart and never responds to you based on what you say, but according to where your heart is. And He is always right. While His answers may seem harsh in these cases, He answered truthfully and accurately. He will do the same for you, even if His answer takes you by surprise or isn’t what you expected.

Day Four

10:1 After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. 2 He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. 3 Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. 4 Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.

v. 1 – I wonder who the 72 were. We know who the Twelve were, but who were the other 60? Did they continue to serve the Lord? Were they in the upper room when the Holy Spirit came? But there are many nameless people who serve the Lord every day. It isn’t important that we know their names; it’s only important that Jesus knows their names.

Don’t think because you’re not a public figure or don’t do “public” things that you aren’t important to Jesus; you are. And what’s more, He will send you ahead of Him to announce that He is coming to people’s towns and hearts. What an honor it is to serve Him, no matter what the role or duty.

v. 2 - It was customary with the Jews to call their rabbis and students reapers; and their work of instruction, the harvest. So Jesus words would have been as much a reference to teaching as to evangelism. Don't underestimate the need to teach people about Jesus and the power that this holds. Also, the Lord wants workers who will go out, not hirelings who want an office and a reserved parking space with generous benefits.

v. 3 – It occurs to me that Jesus empowers those whom He sends out. Too often I have worried about whether or not my message will be “good” or if I will be received when I speak. I have tried to function in my empowerment before I needed it and I have felt empty. Thus I worry and fret over my “effectiveness.” Yet time and again, I will stand up and the Lord will help me do what He sent me to do. It's not about me when I minister, it's about Him. Yet I continually try to make it about me. Help me, Lord.

v. 4 – The Lord gave them instructions to be urgent and trust Him. Those being sent out were to arrive in their villages without any provisions. I am sure that this was unusual and would attract the attention of the village residents. Thus the villagers who would see their lack of provision and welcome the Lord's travelers would show the disciples where the open door was for their ministry. Those who didn't see or care that these travelers weren't equipped for travel would not be worthy of the message that they carried.

I have often said that you should go where you are celebrated and not where you are tolerated. Are you at a place of work or ministry where you are celebrated? If not, it may be time to move on. More on that tomorrow.

Day Five

5 "When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' 6 If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you. 7 Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house. 8 "When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. 9 Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you.' 10 But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, 11 'Even the dust of your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God is near.' 12 I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.

vs. 5&6 – The messengers of God carry with them tangible benefits for those who will receive their message. In this case, the disciples carried shalom or peace from Jesus. If the household was open to that peace, then the disciples had found a ready and willing heart. If not, then they were to move on. It relates to what we said yesterday: Always go where you are celebrated and welcomed, not tolerated and endured.

vs. 7&8 – I have traveled some and thought of this verse on several occasions as I ate what was put before me in faith! I do believe that too many of the modern speakers and

apostles put too much of a burden on the local church by demanding first-class accommodations. If the church can afford it, that's fine. But if not, then the minister should endure and be grateful for what hospitality they can give.

At the same time, churches should treat men and women of God with dignity, caring for their natural needs as if it were Jesus Himself they were ministering to. The rules are clear here: if you want Jesus' peace, then you must not only receive Jesus, but also His messengers.

v. 9 – Jesus never preached the church; He preached the kingdom or government of God. Healing comes from the fact that God, the King, rules over sickness and death. When we pray for the sick, we are identifying with the laws of the Kingdom and not natural laws. When I pray for the sick, I say, “I command every cell in this body to align itself with the kingdom of God—righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” Healing is not about me or the sick person; healing is about God's kingdom.

vs. 10& 11 – I have often spent too much time trying to make something happen where nothing is happening or will happen. Sometimes the answer is not re-doubling your efforts when things aren't going well. The answer may be in seeing the hand of God in your circumstances and moving on to a new job, relationship or ministry where you are celebrated and not tolerated.

God wants to help you get results, but if the people you are working with don't want the results, then you are wasting your time. You would be better off to move on and find someplace that wants the blessing of peace that you carry. But even if your peace isn't received, you can be sure that this too is a sign that the kingdom is close at hand. The people who have rejected your peace or your gift are rejecting the government of God that is the source of that peace and gift.

v. 12 – Wow! What a statement! If an area rejects one of Jesus' kingdom emissaries, it will go better for Sodom and Gomorrah in the judgment! God's government isn't a matter of personal preference, of whether someone can simply take it or leave it. To reject God's government is to reject the King—Jesus—whom God has installed. And to reject the Son and King is to accept another kingdom—the kingdom of darkness. Those are the only two options that any person has.

I want to be known as a Kingdom man. How about you? Are you walking under the authority of God's kingdom and His Son's rule?

Day Six

13 "Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. 14 But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. 15 And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. 16 "He who

listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me."

vs. 13&14 – Obviously Jesus was performing miracles so that people would know and see that the kingdom of God was near. It wasn't a Kingdom as they were expecting, which was the literal restoration of the throne of David. It was a spiritual, internal Kingdom that would touch every area of life—body, soul, and spirit.

It is also obvious that the miracles came to lead people to repentance, which means making a 180 degree turn around in one's life. Repentance is not a one-time event; it is a way of life. If you encounter a habit, behavior or attitude that is not in line with God's kingdom rules, then you must repent, turn around and begin walking in a new direction.

v. 15 – Capernaum was Jesus' adopted hometown. I would imagine that the residents were rather proud of their adopted Son's ministry. But if the residents thought that Jesus' residence gave them special privileges, they needed to think again. The fact that they saw Jesus' public ministry more than others made them more responsible to repent and turn to God. If they refused, then it would be worse for them in the judgment because Jesus had lived there.

There are some who want God as a good luck charm so that good things will happen. But God isn't interested in being a tool used for someone's selfishness. God expects repentance and anything less is unacceptable. He expects Kingdom residents and not Kingdom tourists who visit His word and will every now and then. Are you a Kingdom resident or a Kingdom tourist?

v. 16 – This verse summarizes the ones above for the disciples that Jesus was sending out. If people don't accept you and your message, they are really rejecting me. The Lord spoke this same thing to Samuel when the people requested a king to rule over them:

But when they said, "Give us a king to lead us," this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the LORD. And the LORD told him: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king (1 Samuel 8:6-7).

Don't take any ministry rejection personally. It's not about you; it's about King Jesus and His kingdom. And ultimately, the person rejecting you has rejected the Father's overtures for that person to become properly related to the Father. So keep sowing, keep working and keep your eyes on Jesus. Go where you're celebrated and distribute the peace of God to whomever will receive it.

Day Seven

17 The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." 18 He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19 I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all

the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. 20 However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

v. 17 – The disciples were exhilarated by the success they had. They were especially impressed with their ability to cast out evil spirits in the name of Jesus. The name of Jesus is a powerful entity and the kingdom of darkness has to submit to the power and authority in that name. The second commandment states:

"You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name" (Exodus 20:7).

I don't think this commandment pertains to someone swearing or cursing, using the name of God. Perhaps it is a commandment that prohibits someone from having access to God's name to do good and deliver people from evil and then not using that name (or using it for selfish purpose). Does that make sense to you?

v. 18 – Jesus is referring to Satan's fall from heaven when he rebelled against God. So Jesus knew that heaven had absolute authority over the kingdom of darkness and He was giving that authority to His disciples. You and I have that same authority. That is why we must wage spiritual war with the powers of darkness, not in our own name or strength, but in the name of Jesus.

v. 19 – Just because nothing will harm you doesn't mean that something won't try to harm you. The enemy of God's people uses threats and intimidation to scare God's people. You must learn to stand in this promise that Jesus made if you are going to wage successful warfare against the kingdom of darkness.

v. 20 – It is an exciting thing to be used by God to defeat the kingdom of darkness. But Jesus cautioned the disciples rather to rejoice that they are saved for eternity in Jesus' name. Jesus taught in Matthew that there would be some who would use their spiritual authority but to no avail for their own good:

Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'" (Matthew 7:22-23).

Use the spiritual authority that God has given you in Jesus' name, but don't be too impressed with yourself when you. It has nothing to do with you and everything to do with Him and the price Jesus paid to give you that authority. Keep your focus on the grace of God and what that grace has done for you by bringing you into right relationship with God.