

The Gospel of Luke

Lesson 13: The Twelve, the Five Thousand, and the Confession -- Luke 9:1–

27

For months the Twelve have watched Jesus work. They have seen Him still a storm with a word, cast a legion of demons out of a tormented man, and call a dead girl back to life by the hand. They have listened to Him teach about a kingdom that grows like a seed and a Father who knows the falling of every sparrow. And now, in a single morning, Jesus hands the work to them. He gathers the Twelve, gives them “power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases” (v. 1), and sends them out with almost nothing in their hands, to do what they have only ever watched Him do. The classroom has become the field. The disciples are about to discover that following Jesus is not a spectator sport.

Luke 9 is a hinge in the Gospel. Up to this point the question hanging over every chapter has been, “Who is this?” Even Herod the tetrarch, hearing the reports, is perplexed and keeps asking, “Who is this about whom I hear such things?” (v. 9). The crowds have their theories. The religious leaders have their suspicions. And then, on an ordinary day of prayer, Jesus turns to His own disciples and makes the question personal: “Who do you say that I am?” (v. 20). Everything in this lesson is moving toward Peter’s answer and toward the stunning words Jesus speaks the moment that answer is given.

In between the sending and the question stands one of the only miracles recorded in all four Gospels. Five thousand men, besides women and children, are hungry and far from home, and the disciples want Jesus to send them away. Instead He says four words that must have stopped their hearts: “You give them something to eat” (v. 13). They have five loaves and two fish and a crowd that no household budget could feed. What follows is a quiet, almost unhurried miracle. Jesus takes the little they have, looks up to heaven, blesses it, and the food simply keeps coming until everyone is satisfied and twelve baskets of leftovers remain, one, perhaps, for each disciple who said it could not be done.

Then the mood turns. Peter confesses Jesus to be “The Christ of God” (v. 20), and before the disciples can build a single dream of thrones and armies on that confession, Jesus tells them that the Christ must suffer, be rejected, be killed, and on the third day be raised (v. 22). And to follow Him, He says, is to take up a cross daily and to lose your life in order to save it (vv. 23–24). Read this passage slowly. It will press a question on you that no one else can answer for you. Not what the crowds say, not what your family says, but what you yourself say about who Jesus is, and whether you are willing to follow a crucified and risen Lord on the only road He ever offered His disciples.

Group Discussion: Jesus sent the Twelve out with no staff, no bag, no bread, and no money (v. 3), forcing them to depend entirely on God and on the hospitality of others. When have you

been put in a situation where you had to depend on God rather than on your own resources, and what did you learn about Him in it? What makes that kind of dependence so uncomfortable for most of us, and so good for us at the same time?

Personal Reflection: Jesus says that to follow Him means to deny yourself and take up your cross “daily” (v. 23). A cross was not an inconvenience but an instrument of death, carried by a condemned man on his way to die. What is one place in your life right now where following Jesus is costing you something, and where you are tempted to set the cross down? What would it look like to pick it up again this week?

Read Luke 9:1–27

Study Questions

1. Jesus 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” (vv. 1–2). What does this commissioning teach us about the nature of the apostles’ work, the message they were to preach, and the source of their authority?
2. Jesus instructed the Twelve to “take nothing for the journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money” (v. 3), so that they would lean wholly on God. Where in your own life are you trusting your resources, your planning, or your reputation more than you are trusting God, and what would it look like to travel a little lighter and trust Him more?
3. When the disciples wanted to send the crowds away to find food, Jesus said, “You give them something to eat,” and then used five loaves and two fish to feed thousands with twelve baskets left over (vv. 13–17). What does this miracle reveal about who Jesus is, about His compassion, and about how He works through the small and inadequate things we place in His hands?
4. Faced with a need far beyond their means, the disciples saw only what they lacked: “We have no more than five loaves and two fish” (v. 13). When you face a need or a calling that feels far bigger than your resources, do you tend to focus on what you lack or on what God can do, and how might this scene reshape the way you respond?
5. On a day of prayer, Jesus asked, “Who do the crowds say that I am?” and then, “But who do you say that I am?” and Peter answered, “The Christ of God” (vv. 18–20). Why does Jesus press His disciples beyond the opinions of the crowds to a personal confession, and what does it mean to confess Jesus as “the Christ of God”?
6. Many people around Jesus had an opinion about Him: John the Baptist raised, Elijah, or one of the old prophets (vv. 7–8, 19). Whose voices and opinions most shape the way you think about Jesus, and what would it mean for you to move from a secondhand faith you inherited to a firsthand confession that is truly your own?
7. The moment Peter confessed Him as the Christ, Jesus said that “the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected... and be killed, and on the third day be raised” (v. 22). Why was it so important for Jesus to bind the title “Christ” together with suffering, death, and

resurrection, and how does this correct the expectation of a political or conquering Messiah?

8. Jesus warned, "Whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory" (v. 26). Where are you most tempted to be quietly ashamed of Jesus or of His words, perhaps in your workplace, among friends, or online, and what would faithful, unashamed confession look like in that specific setting?
9. Jesus said, "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" (vv. 23-24), and then promised that some standing there would "see the kingdom of God" before they died (v. 27). What does Jesus teach here about the true cost and the true reward of discipleship, and what does He mean by a kingdom that some of His hearers would live to see?
10. Look back across the whole passage, from the sending of the Twelve, to the feeding of the multitude, to Peter's confession, to the call to take up the cross daily. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through these verses. What is the single truth from Luke 9:1-27 that you most need to carry into this coming week?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Romans 10:9-10, confessing with the mouth that Jesus is Lord and believing in the heart that God raised Him; 1 Timothy 6:12-13, Christ Jesus who made the good confession before Pontius Pilate; Daniel 2:44, the God of heaven setting up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed; Acts 2:36, God making the crucified Jesus both Lord and Christ; Galatians 2:20, being crucified with Christ so that He lives in us.