

JESUS SENDS OUT THE TWELVE

Luke 9:1-9

Key Verse: 9:2

“...and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.”

This chapter marks a transition of Jesus' focus from public ministry to discipleship training. Up until this point, Jesus healed the sick and preached the good news of the kingdom of God, traveling from village to village. But beginning with this chapter, Jesus pays more attention to his twelve disciples, training them to be responsible servants of God.

In today's passage, Jesus gives his disciples fieldwork training for the first time. Before sending them out, Jesus equipped them with his power and authority. He also gave them spiritual principles to follow in carrying out the mission. In our ministry of serving young students today, we need to have spiritual principles as well. May God help us to learn and apply the principles that Jesus gave us!

I. JESUS GAVE THEM POWER AND AUTHORITY (1)

Look at verse 1. *When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases ...* Until now, the main focus of Jesus' ministry had been teaching and healing of the crowd. His twelve disciples followed him everywhere. They observed the work of the Messiah. When they saw Jesus healing a paralytic, opening the eyes of a blind man, and touching a leper with his hand of compassion, they realized that Jesus was no ordinary teacher. Every time Jesus performed a miracle, their eyes got bigger. They exclaimed many “wows.” Then something wonderful happened to them. They began to see Jesus as God. From then on, Jesus trained them to be spiritual leaders. Jesus is the God of hope. Jesus had a hope of raising the slow-learning disciples to be great servants of God.

Jesus' disciples were still spiritually young. They were not mature enough to be spiritual leaders for the suffering people. But Jesus had faith that they could be raised as great servants of God through training. He sent them out for an evangelistic journey. How did Jesus help them to prepare for the journey? Jesus did not equip them with various skills such as public speaking, effective communications, or human psychology. Instead, he gave them power and authority. Jesus wanted them to experience the power and authority of God in their fieldwork training. Why? God's work is different from worldly business. When God works in a person, he or she is changed from a sinner into a beautiful child of God. This cannot be done through some clever marketing strategy. Only the Holy Spirit can change a person from the inside. So God's work is done when his servants rely on the power and authority of God, rather than their own human abilities. We must know that we can do a great work of God when we have the power and authority of God.

Paul had a vision of preaching the gospel to the whole world. Then God sent him to Rome as a prisoner. He was old and tired and he was confined in a prison. But he didn't give up. He said, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (Php 4:13). Humanly, what Paul could do was very limited. He studied the word of God with those who visited him in the prison and the soldiers who were guarding him. But when he depended on the power and authority of God, God himself did a great work through him.

What does it mean to have the power and authority of God? How can we be equipped with the power and authority of God? Well, we must ask the Lord in our earnest prayer to give us his power and authority. At the same, do you realize the following? If you are a true Christian with a firm commitment to follow Jesus, you already have the power and authority of God. I say this because the word of God is the power of God. St. Paul said in Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes." The gospel has the power of God to change a person from a sinner to a child of God. When Jesus began to teach the word of God in the synagogue in Capernaum the first time, the people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority (Mk 1:22). The word of God has the power and authority. May God help us to absolutely believe in the word of God so that we can help young people with the power and authority of God!

II. PREACH THE KINGDOM OF GOD (2)

Look at verse 2. ... *and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.* These two things were what Jesus himself had been doing. Now he sent out his disciples to do the same. The first was to preach the kingdom of God. The Israelites were suffering politically and economically because of the oppression of the Roman Empire. The disciples had more urgent things to do to help the suffering people than preaching the kingdom of God. Setting up a soup kitchen would have made more sense to them. But Jesus told them to preach the kingdom of God. Why? Human situations and problems change over time, but the Biblical constant is that all people need the kingdom of God. Therefore, we must also proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God. Still, we often feel we should talk to students about things that are more relevant to them than the kingdom of God. To many young people, the kingdom of God is not a topic of top interest. They feel they can worry about it when they get old. Topics such as dating, social media, college tuition, and even politics are much more appealing to them.

But the fact is that Jesus sent out his disciples to preach the kingdom of God. At the very beginning of his messianic ministry, Jesus proclaimed, "The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mk 1:15) The key point of Jesus' message was the kingdom of God. Once the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray. Jesus said to them: *When you pray, say: "Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come"* (Lk 11:2). Jesus taught them that they must pray for the kingdom of God to come. But the disciples did not yet understand what Jesus taught

them. They were very much earth-bound. They were dreaming about the day when Jesus would establish his kingdom in this world and they would become its cabinet members. Later, however, Peter realized that all earthly things were temporal. He learned that only the kingdom of God is eternal and our life on this earth is a pilgrimage toward the kingdom of God (1Pe 1:3-4).

The good news of the kingdom of God gives a living hope for all mankind. Some people think that they would be happy only if they had enough money. But many people who already have millions of dollars still are unhappy. It is because they don't have a living hope. Money cannot be our true hope. In fact, nothing of this world can give us a true hope, because nothing in this world can last forever. Everything spoils and fades away. Only the kingdom of God can give us a true hope. We Christians are those who have a living hope in the kingdom of God. We will have eternal life in the kingdom of God. When we get there, God will wipe away every tear from our eyes (Rev 21:4). We will enjoy eternal life with the Lord Jesus forever and ever. This is our ultimate hope. Even while in this world, we begin to taste the kingdom of God when we come to Jesus. In him, we can taste love, joy and peace in our hearts. We can also experience that our sinful desires gradually decline as we are led by the Holy Spirit.

Look at verse 2 again. ... *and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.* Jesus sent out his disciples to heal the sick also. He told them to preach the kingdom of God but he also told them not to ignore the people's present reality. Jesus healed the sick both physically and spiritually. In Luke's eyes, healing was complete only when a person was healed both physically and spiritually (Jn 6:63). For example, a tax collector named Levi looked quite normal on the outside. Inwardly, however, he was sick with a spiritual sickness called selfishness. In his selfishness, he wounded himself and others. But Jesus healed him and trained him to become a disciple of truth. We call this spiritual healing. He later became St. Matthew who recorded the beautiful Sermon on the Mount. Who can deny the fact that Jesus is the greatest physician in the world? But we must know that Jesus came to this world to help us repent our sins and to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God. Ultimately, Jesus came to bring us back to his kingdom. Still, we should know that many young people today are hurting. They carry many wounds and scars mostly from their broken family. We should not ignore their emotional sufferings even as we share the hope of the kingdom of God with them. We want to help them to come to Jesus and receive his healing touch.

III. SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES FOR GOSPEL WORKERS (3-9)

Look at verses 3-5. *He told them: "Take nothing for the journey—no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra shirt. Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. If people do not welcome you, leave their town and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them."* These instructions are more principles than a to-do list. Let's think about the principles so that we may learn to be men and women of principles in serving the Lord.

First, depend on God. Look at verse 3. *He told them: “Take nothing for the journey—no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra shirt.”* When we travel, we need to pack essentials such as toiletry and clothing along with some spending money. Some people pack a large suitcase even for an overnight trip. But Jesus told his disciples to take nothing for the journey, not even extra shirt. Does this mean that God’s servants have to become survivalists somehow? No. It means that God provides for his servants who do his work. Matthew 6:33 reads: *But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.* The principle Jesus teaches here is that we must depend on God, not on material means. In this material-oriented society, everything has a price tag. People would not dare to think about doing anything unless funding is available. However, God’s work is different. God’s work is done by the power and authority of God when his servants depend on him by faith. In fact, money can be a hindrance to God’s work. People tend to move away from God as soon as they begin to depend on money. May God help us to depend on God only!

Second, “stay there.” Look at verse 4. *Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town.* Jesus told them not to move around from house to house, seeking better food or lodging, but stay in one house while preaching in a community. This way they could make friends with the host family and have a deep, spiritual relationship with them. This way they could establish the family to become a house church for the community. During his missionary journeys to the Gentile world, Paul tried to establish a house church wherever he visited. For example, the Philippian church was born when Lydia responded Paul’s preaching and her house was established as a base camp for Paul’s ministry (Ac 16:14-15). The Corinthian church was pioneered when the household of Stephanas became the first converts in Achaia (1Co 16:15). Let’s pray that God may bless our ministry to establish many house churches.

Third, don’t compromise. Look at verse 5. *“If people do not welcome you, leave their town and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.”* This main point of this verse is not that we should give up on people who are not friendly to us. It teaches us that we must not compromise for the sake of logistic convenience. There are always some people who reject the word of God. God’s servants must not compromise with them. Rather, we must make it clear that they will be accountable for their action (Ac 13:51). We often meet students who reject our invitation to Bible study or who refuse to accept the word of God. Should we water down the gospel message to accommodate them? What does Jesus say to us? Look at verse 5 again. *“If people do not welcome you, leave their town and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.”* Gospel workers are the ambassadors of Christ who deliver the good news of the kingdom of God. As such, we must have a clear conviction and identity as God’s servants. We must have absolute faith in the saving power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In Mark 16:16, Jesus declares: *Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.*

How did the disciples respond? They set out and went from village to village, preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere (6). The result was remarkable. Luke tells us that the disciples’ fieldwork had a great impact on the people. One example

was Herod the tetrarch. He had not attended the disciples' evangelistic meetings. But when he heard about all that was going on, he was greatly disturbed because of the evil thing that he had done. When someone came and reported that John had been raised from the dead, his heart sank. When others said that Elijah had appeared, he was totally haunted by the demons and said, "*I beheaded John. Who, then, is this I hear such things about?*" Hoping that what he had heard was just a rumor, he tried to see Jesus (9). Instead of repenting his sins before God, he just wished that his guilty feelings would go away somehow. Sadly he remained proud and refused to accept the message of the kingdom of God.

May God help us to depend on the power and authority of Jesus as we proclaim the kingdom of God! May God help us to be men and women of faith who depend on him in all circumstances! May God bless us to live a life of faith and have a spiritual impact on people around us!