

Luke's Gospel: Chapter 9 v 51 to Chapter 10 v 42

The Mission of the Seventy, and Other Stories...

A Samaritan village rejects Jesus (Luke 9 v 51 to 56)

“He set his face to go to Jerusalem” (v 51) – this marks the beginning of a new section of the gospel. Jesus has finished his Galilean ministry, and begins the long, final journey towards Jerusalem, with the steadfast determination fitting the difficulty of the task ahead of him.

- Why did the Samaritan villagers refuse to receive Jesus (v 53)? What do you think triggered James’ and John’s extreme reaction? Do you think their ‘outrage’ was justified? What did Jesus think (v 55)?

The cost of following Jesus (Luke 9 v 57 to 62)

“I will follow you wherever you go” (v 57) – this person wanted to follow Jesus, but did not understand the cost. Even animals have their own home, but Jesus did not, and so it costs to follow this kind of Messiah...

- How would you describe the three different types of people described here? Why was Jesus not satisfied with their responses to his invitation to follow him?
- The second hesitant follower may have meant he wanted to stay at home and care for his father until he died. But what does Jesus say is the most important thing?

“No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God” (v 62) – when ploughing a field in those days, a farmer kept the rows straight by focusing on an object in front of him, off in the distance, such as a tree. In our Christian life, we must keep our eyes on Jesus in front of us, and never take our eyes off him. More than anyone else, Jesus lived like this: “He set his face to go to Jerusalem” (v 51).

Jesus sends out the seventy (Luke 10 v 1 to 12)

“The harvest is plentiful” (v 2) – this is still true: if we believe that it is but a short time until Jesus returns, we should make the principles of Jesus’ commission to the seventy our own. “The labourers are few” – when there is much work but few workers, you will be busy! “Therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest” – Jesus commands them to pray: the work is great and cannot be accomplished without much prayer. “Go your way” (v 3) – Jesus commands them to go, because God will use them to answer their own prayers...

- Why did Jesus tell the seventy not to take any provisions? What were they to preach (v 9)? What were they to do if they met resistance?

“I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves” (v 3) – Jesus commands them to go with a heart that trusts in God. Going as lambs among wolves may not sound very attractive, yet this is exactly how Jesus was sent, and how the power of God worked through him mightily. Next, Jesus gives them specific instructions for ministry: they are not to be distracted either by material concerns (“carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals”), or by tedious ceremonies of etiquette (“greet no one on the road”).

“Remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide” (v 7) – they are to trust that God will provide for them through the generosity of others. “For the labourer deserves his wages” – Jesus tells his disciples to regard the support given to them as payment for their work for God’s kingdom. “Heal the sick” (v 9) – their healing ministry shows that Kingdom of God will be shown in acts of mercy and kindness. “Say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you’” – healing is to be a part of their preaching; they can then describe what the kingdom of God is all about, from what Jesus has taught and shown them.

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Woe to unrepentant cities (Luke 10 v 13 to 16)

- Here we can see some important principles behind God's judgement of mankind. What can we say about the western world's accountability before God – given our easy access to the gospel and the scriptures, the abundance of churches, our freedom of worship, religious tolerance and lack of persecution?

The Bible never mentions Jesus' miracles in Chorazin, suggesting that the gospels are sketches of Jesus' life, rather than full biographies. John (21 v 25) said it would be impossible to recount everything Jesus did.

The return of the seventy (Luke 10 v 17 to 20)

“Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!” (v 17) – Jesus had not originally commissioned them to cast out demons (as he did the twelve disciples in Luke 9 v 1, 2). Therefore, this was an unexpected blessing of their ministry. “Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this” (v 20) – Jesus warns them to rejoice in what God has done for them (“that your names are written in heaven”), not in what they had done for God (“that the spirits are subject to you”).

“I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven” (v 18) – Jesus may be referring here to the imminent decisive victory over Satan at the Cross (Luke 9 v 51). The Bible describes *four* different falls of Satan: (i) from anointed to profane (Ezekiel 28 v 14 to 16, before Genesis 3); (ii) from access to heaven (see Job 1 v 12, Zechariah 3 v 1) to restriction to the earth (at the Cross, or during the Tribulation – see Revelation 12 v 9); (iii) from the earth to bondage in the pit (Revelation 20 v 2, 3, at the start of the millennium); (iv) from the pit to the lake of fire (Revelation 20 v 10, at the end of the millennium).

Jesus rejoices in the Father's will (Luke 10 v 21 to 24)

“He rejoiced in the Holy Spirit” (v 21) – literally, the ancient Greek says ‘he was thrilled with joy’. God delights in using the weak and foolish things of this world to confound the wise (1 Corinthians 1 v 27 to 29).

- Who do you think are the “wise and understanding”, and who are the “little children” (v 21)?

The parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10 v 25 to 37)

- What does it mean in practical terms to love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength? What does ‘loving your neighbour as yourself’ actually mean? Who is *your* neighbour (v 29)?

“A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers” (v 30) – the road from Jerusalem to Jericho was infamous for robberies, so it wasn't surprising that Jesus set the story on this particular road. “Now by chance a priest was going down that road” (v 31) – the priest and the Levite (both religious officials) saw their Jewish brother lying in this terrible state, but they both “passed by on the other side”. “But a Samaritan... had compassion” (v 33). Jews and Samaritans despised each other, both racially and religiously (“Jews have no dealings with Samaritans”, John 4 v 9). Instead of passing by, the Samaritan loved the ‘man who fell among robbers’ with a sacrificial love, giving freely of his time and his resources: (i) the wine, containing alcohol, had an antiseptic effect on the man's wounds; (ii) the oil would help to soothe his wounds; (iii) to “set him on his own animal” meant that the Samaritan had to walk; (iv) two denarii would have provided for the man's needs in the inn for two or three weeks.

Martha and Mary (Luke 10 v 38 to 42)

- Martha and Mary were concerned about different things. What did Jesus consider to be the most important thing (v 42), and how did he resolve the tension between them?

There are people like Mary: those who know how to serve, and also to sit at Jesus' feet. There are people like Martha: those who diligently, and with the best intentions, serve, but without adding the “one thing” that is necessary – devotion to Jesus. And there are people who are neither like Mary or Martha: they are not even in the house with Jesus, for they are too busy with their own pursuits...