

Series: The Gospel of Luke – Jesus: the God man
Preached @ ECCC by Grant Peers on 13th November, 2011

Scripture: Luke 9:1-17

INTRODUCTION

World War II battles in the Pacific a sailor in a United States submarine was stricken with acute appendicitis and was near death. The nearest surgeon was thousands of miles away. The sailor's friend, Pharmacist Mate Wheller Lipes, watched his temperature rise to 106 degrees. The man's only hope was an operation. So Lipes said to his stricken buddy, "I have watched doctors do this operation. I think I can do it. What do you say?" The sailor consented.

In the wardroom the patient was stretched out on a table beneath a floodlight. The mate and assisting officers, dressed in reversed pyjama tops, masked their faces with gauze. The cook boiled water for sterilizing. Aides poured ether on gauze and placed the gauze over a tea strainer to act as an anaesthesia mask over the man's mouth. A broken-handled scalpel was the operating instrument. Alcohol drained from the torpedoes was the antiseptic. Bent tablespoons kept the muscles open.

After cutting through the layers of muscle, the mate took twenty minutes to find the appendix. Two and a half hours later, the last catgut stitch was sewn just as the last drop of ether gave out. Thirteen days later the sailor was back at work.¹

This surgery was a great accomplishment not because the operation that was performed but because of the person that performed it.

GOSPEL MINISTRY

The specifics of what Jesus tells the disciples here are particular to their preaching tour, but the principles are the same

1. GOSPEL MINISTRY IS EMPOWERED BY CHRIST (9:1-2)

Jesus has just performed some tremendous miracles: stilled wind and waves, cast our demons, healed a woman plagued by sickness for 12 years and raised a 12 year old girl from the dead. The point is that Jesus has all authority and power. And he delegates this power to the disciples – the power is the force, capacity and energy. And at the same time he gives authority – which is the right to use it.

It's like a TV remote – a thing of tremendous power. If your kid gets his little hands on it he has the power. But he father in his right mind delegates the control of the remote. Or anyone who sits behind the wheel of a car and turns the ignition on has tremendous power at his toe tips but when you get your driver's license you get the authority to use that power!

¹ Kent Hughes, *Luke: that you may know the truth*, pg 321

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Just imagine what it must have been like to lay your hands on a lame man and see him get up and walk; to see leprosy disappear before your sight; to see a terminally ill man restored to his family; a feverish child get up and go play with his friends.

Some people use this passage to make it sound like there should be healings and demons cast out today. But here is the thing: if you want to make the healings and demon possessions normative then you also need to make the “no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra tunic” normative too! I am not saying that God does not reach out with signs and wonders even today – but they must serve the greater purpose of ushering in the kingdom of God.

The point is not the miracles – in fact Jesus is going to get annoyed with the crowd at the end of this chapter and call them an ‘unbelieving and perverse generation’. And in chapter 11 he rebukes them because they are always asking for miraculous signs. The point: a sign is great if it gets you to the thing it points to, but if you just gather around the foot of a sign post and stare at it saying, “This is a wonderful sign, let’s stay here at this sign” – then there is no point in the sign!

Point is that the ministry that we perform is through the delegated power and authority of Jesus. You can do nothing in and of yourself. Jesus says that in John 15 – apart from me you can do nothing. Gospel ministry comes from a humble heart, a heavily dependent heart. My continual prayer (you can ask Nick) is that we would be heavily dependent on God and that he would show us any ways in which we are straying into independence.

2. GOSPEL MINISTRY IS ABOUT KINGDOM AND COMPASSION (9:2)

Now they went out doing these miracles but also preaching the kingdom. What does that mean? Jesus said right at the beginning of his ministry in Mark 1:15, “The kingdom of God is near (at hand), repent and believe the good news (gospel).”

Every king has a kingdom. Jesus is the king and so when he was on earth the kingdom of God broken through into this age with power and authority (calm storms, cast out demons, heals the sick, raises the dead). And his kingdom is not about a realm (a plot of land in the Middle East) but about his reign over the hearts of human beings. So the disciples preached the good news that the true King of Israel was here and that he has come to rescue and redeem and restore and release and reinstate his people. You can kind of understand that some got the wrong end of the stick and wanted political revolution...

...because there is a mystery to the kingdom. The kingdom comes in two stages. The king comes first on a donkey with a branch of peace and amnesty. Later he will come on a great white

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horse with a sword of judgment. Many kingdom blessings have been fulfilled; but the consummation is still future.²

When we preach the good news it is not only that the King has come and made a way for our sins to be forgiven, but also that he is returning to call his own into a consummated kingdom.

Gospel ministry is Christ centred... it is so easy to use Jesus as a means to an end – like miracles – better family, health, job, self-esteem...

3. GOSPEL MINISTRY WORKS (AND SOMETIMES NOT) (9:3-9)

I got worried when I first read this cause I thought maybe it has implications for me - like a pay cut; and for you guys to – like I need to find one of your houses to stay in! But in chapter 22:35-38 Jesus is going to allow them to take a purse with money. It is so dangerous to make narrative normative!

Here an interesting question: if you got rejected does that mean you didn't get supper that night? The villages were small and not close together. If you didn't find a home that you slept outside without you extra blanky! Remember Jesus said no snacks, cellphones, iPads... I bet there were some really hard lessons for them to learn.

The point: even though you do miracles you still get rejected. Even if you serve the Almighty King of the universe and you are going on a mission at his behest things don't always go well. Sometimes you get you head cut off, or you're hung up on a cross, or your stoned to death. That would be the end of John, Jesus, Stephen and the 12. Now where does that leave you and me!

Sometimes the results are glorious, but other times it is really hard. I am an introspective, analytical kind of guy. My first reaction when something goes wrong is to think what I could have done better. But sometimes the seed falls on a hard, rock, resistance path! In this sense gospel ministry is bitter-sweet because we know that the offer of Christ and the deep and passionate and fulfilling life that he offers is glorious. Yet some still don't have the ears to hear! That is why Paul says, "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some" (1Co 9:22b).

4. GOSPEL MINISTRY ACCOMPLISHED THE IMPOSSIBLE (9:10-17)

Read [Luke 9:10-14](#)

² John Piper, *Sermon: How Is the Kingdom Present?*

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Jesus has tried to escape with his disciples for some time to recover alone, but to no avail. The crowd finds them and Jesus just continues to minister to them. But then it starts to get late and his board of elders decide to give Jesus a bit of friendly advice: send the people home for food and shelter. But Jesus says, 'you feed them'. Now understand that these guys have almost no money. Jesus even get his tax money out of the mouth of a fish. In John's gospel Philip says it would take eight months wages (conservatively R24,000) to give each person a bite. And there were about 20,000 men woman and children there (conservatively). 5,000 men and remember – no birth control in those days so families were big. Jesus said sit in groups of 50 – that could have been just one family!

But here is the point: has Jesus ever asked you to do something that is (apparently) completely impossible? I have no idea how they were even meant to start being obedient to his command!

Read [Luke 9:15-17](#)

Jesus takes the bread and fish, prays a prayer of thanks and somewhere between his hands and the hands of the crowd the bread and fish supernaturally multiplied. Have you ever considered what that must have looked like? And there was enough left over for a light breakfast the next morning too (12 baskets).

CONCLUSION

I want to plant a seed of hope and a seed of expectation in your heart and mine this morning for the possibilities of gospel ministry. My prayer is that God would speak into our hearts completely impossible tasks

Examples: Family Policy institute; loaves and fishes, U-turn, West Coast Outreach; Mrs Finch...