

Jesus' Mission

(Luke 9:51-62)

This passage marks a significant turning point in Jesus' ministry. This chapter and the following 10 chapters have no parallel in the other Gospels. Most of the events are recorded by Luke alone.

In the opening scene of this passage, Jesus sets his face to go to Jerusalem. "Set his face" echoes the song of the Suffering Servant of **Isaiah 50:7**: "Therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame; he who vindicates me is near. Quoting from this passage of Isaiah, Jesus seems to indicate that he expects strong opposition in Jerusalem. The direct way from Galilee to Jerusalem led through Samaria, but most Jews avoided it. For Jesus to take the road through Samaria on his way to Jerusalem is unusual. That not withstanding, he sends his disciples ahead of him as they enter a village of the Samaritans to make ready for his arrival.

This was one of the turning points in Jesus' life. As he launched forth in this new direction, the first subject covered in His mission. The mission of the Son of Man is

seen in clear terms—terms so clear that the follower of the Lord cannot miss the meaning.

Jesus' mission upon earth was to secure salvation. Jesus knew his mission: He knew why he had come to earth. He also knew that the time for him to die for the salvation of men was at hand. Note the words, "as the time approached." He was fully aware that the time had come. Therefore, he turned around and "resolutely set out for Jerusalem."

What is so significant about Jerusalem? Very simply, it was in Jerusalem that Jesus was to die for the salvation of men and be received up, that is, ascend into heaven. When Jesus "resolutely set out for Jerusalem, Jerusalem symbolized death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord. It was in Jerusalem that he secured salvation for man through his death, resurrection, and ascension.

Jesus' mission on earth was, however, misunderstood. Let me make note of **three** things of vital importance. **First**, Jesus sent some disciples to run ahead of him, to prepare the way for his coming. Apparently, this was the method Christ used to let the people of an area know he

was soon to enter that city. Those who had interest could thereby be prepared for his coming.

Second, Jesus was rejected by the Samaritans. Why? Because he was heading for Jerusalem, going to a place they despised. The Jews were unacceptable to them; therefore, they would have nothing to do with Jesus if he was going to minister in Jerusalem. Jerusalem had its own worship and priest, and the Samaritans had theirs. If Jesus would be theirs alone, they would have gladly received him; if not, then He was not welcomed in their circles.

Third, James and John were upset, fiery, and angry over such rejection. They asked Jesus if they should destroy the village by calling down fire from heaven to consume the people. Now you can tell why James and John were known as the “Sons of Thunder.”

Let me make note of **two** crucial points. The **first** point is that the faith of James and John in Jesus was strong. They believed, without question, that Jesus had the authority to control the power of heaven, either through himself or through them. And **second**, the wrong

understanding of Jesus' mission that James and John had was also strong. They thought in terms of a Messianic Ruler on Earth, subjecting men, and forcing them to worship and serve God. They saw the Messiah's judging those who rejected him.

Note that James and John were guilty of the very same error that the Samaritans had just committed. They were full of bitterness, wrath, and vengeance, reacting against the Samaritans just as the Samaritans had reacted against the Jews and Jesus. They wanted to destroy the Samaritans because the Samaritans were not willing to worship Jesus and live as James or John lived.

Jesus' mission was not to destroy life, but to save it. This is repeated time and time again. Let me make note of several facts confirming this. **First**, Christ proclaimed that today is the day of salvation, and he proclaimed in loudly and clearly. **Second**, Scripture pronounces that judgment is to come. There is a day "when man is destined to die once, and after that face judgment."

This Scripture reading continues to discuss the great cost of discipleship. For example, some people desire to

follow Christ. Yet they come ever so short and miss eternal life. Why? Because they never knew the price of discipleship. They were to pay a great price, but they know nothing about it or else were unwilling to pay the price. True discipleship costs everything a person is and has.

In verse 57, a man offered to become a follower of Jesus, and he made an unusual promise: he would follow Jesus wherever he led. Why? For the same reasons many are attracted to the Lord. He enjoyed the presence of the Lord and his followers, he was motivated by the Lord's wisdom and teaching, and he appreciated the good the Lord did. Jesus' reply was to the point. The man had to count the cost, for Jesus offered no luxury and no material comfort—only self-denial. The man had to deny himself and sacrifice all he was and had.

Let me note several facts. **First**, Jesus himself was the prime example. He denied himself completely. He sacrificed and gave all, both himself and all he had. He did not even have a place to lay his head. The animals of the world did; the birds had their nests and the foxes had

their holes, but Jesus had no place. He gave all to meet the needs of a dying and desperate world. **Second**, Jesus told the man to count the cost. A profession was not enough. Being willing to follow was not enough. The man must deny himself completely, sacrificing, and giving all he was-and-had to meet the needs of a lost and desperate world. **Third**, Jesus called Himself the Son of Man. This pictured exactly who he was. The man was to follow Jesus, accepting him as the Son of Man. He was to accept Jesus as the Ideal Servant of Man, the Ideal Man who loved and cared and ministered and felt for all, and who did it perfectly.

And one thought. Some persons are willing and determined to go to the ends of the earth. However, Jesus said that He—the Son of Man and His pattern of life—must be accepted.

Many are committed, but their commitments are self-commitments, not Christ-centered commitments. We must realize that self-commitments can arise from (1) strong wills, (2) strong determinations, and (3) strong discipline. And the person can follow through in a great

way. But self-commitment is not enough for Christ. There has to be a total commitment to the Son of Man, abandoning all of self and all of the world. Which is precisely what we can find in **Luke 9:23**,” Then he said to them all: ‘If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me’.”

The work of proclaiming the kingdom requires single-minded devotion and, as he has already told the disciples, a life of self-denial. This is illustrated in three dramatic encounters that Jesus has “along the road” (v. 57). First, an enthusiastic follower expresses his wish to follow Jesus anywhere and everywhere. I wonder if he really understood where Jesus was going; none of the Twelve seemed to. The next two men want to first fulfill family obligations before following Jesus. In each case, Jesus reminds them, and us, of the uncompromising character of discipleship. He is not laying down new commands, such as “don’t own a house (v. 58). He is not overturning the command to honor one’s parents. Jesus himself instructs us to care for our families (Matthew 15:4-6). Jesus is dramatically emphasizing that following

him is the priority and will sometimes involve costly choices (vv. 60-62).

Many Christians throughout history have given up homes, careers, comfort, and even, for a time, family in order to serve the kingdom. God may not call us to make such sacrifices, but he does call all of us to be willing to do so—He demands our total commitment.

So, what are the lessons we can learn from this Scripture reading Luke?

This Scripture reading from Luke teaches that following Jesus requires a single-minded focus and unwavering commitment to his mission, even if it means sacrificing personal desires or priorities. It emphasizes the importance of choosing God's kingdom above all else, including family and worldly ambitions. Jesus also presents three conditions for discipleship: (1) prioritize following him above all else, (2) be willing to sacrifice personal comfort and desires to the sake of his mission,

and (3) recognize that following Him is a call to action, not just an ideal.

Please bow your heads as I pray.

Healing God, give us the compassions and the resources to care for our brothers and sisters in difficulty. Help each individual to find the solutions and the peace they are seeking. Help us all to learn from each other, to respect each other, and to realize what is truly important. Help us to focus on our commitment to follow Jesus, to prioritize his will over our personal needs and desires, and to recognize the demands of discipleship. We ask this in the name of your Son and our Savior, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**