

Luke 9E

- When we ended our study last week, we left a few things hanging unresolved
 - Jesus had just returned from the mountain where the disciples saw His transfiguration
 - After He came down, He was asked to heal a demon possessed boy
 - We watched Him perform the healing after the disciples were unable to do it
 - Last week we saw that the power of the enemy was on display in this boy, which had the effect of scaring the crowd
 - Yet Jesus demonstrated the far, far greater power of God over the enemy as He dispensed with the demon in a matter of a few words
 - And in verse 43, we noted that the crowd was amazed at how easily God could perform such a miracle
 - And last week I mentioned that this miracle was closely connected to event on the mountain and to the statement He makes to the disciples immediately following the healing
 - Let's look at this series of passages again before we examine the connection

[Luke 9:43](#) And they were all amazed at the greatness of God.

¶ But while everyone was marveling at all that He was doing, He said to His disciples,

[Luke 9:44](#) "Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men."

[Luke 9:45](#) But they did not understand this statement, and it was concealed from them so that they would not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask Him about this statement.

- In the midst of this miracle as the crowd continues to marvel at the healed boy, Jesus abruptly mentions that in the near future, He would be delivered into the hands of men
 - Mark reports that Jesus also told them in this moment that these men would kill Jesus and that on the third day Jesus would be raised up

- And Luke says the disciples couldn't understand the statement in the moment, and were scared to ask for clarification
- By itself, this statement seems to come out of no where
 - What was Jesus saying and why did He choose this moment to discuss it?
 - Let's consider His words
 - He says let this sink in – or listen carefully
 - The Son of Man – a Messianic term Jesus used to describe Himself frequently – will be delivered over to men
 - In Greek the words Jesus uses have some subtle underlying meaning
 - He says handed over – paradidomi – betrayed
 - Betrayed to the hands of men – anthropos – which can also be translated enemy
 - So His words suggest a double meaning
 - Jesus was telling them He would be betrayed into the hands of the Enemy by being handed over to men
- We know, of course, that's exactly what happened in Jerusalem
 - Jesus was betrayed by a disciple – one of the men who was standing with Jesus in this moment hearing these words
 - And the instigator for that betrayal and for the persecution that followed was none other than Satan Himself
 - But if understanding what Jesus meant is fairly straightforward, understanding why He chose to bring it up here is a bit more difficult
- To begin, we need to go back a few verses to the point where Jesus was returning from the mountain
 - Though Luke doesn't record it, Mark quotes Jesus making an interesting statement as He descends the mountain

[Mark 9:9](#) ¶ As they were coming down from the mountain, He gave them orders not to relate to anyone what they had seen, until the Son of Man rose from the dead.

[Mark 9:10](#) They seized upon that statement, discussing with one another what rising from the dead meant.

- As Jesus descends from the mountain, he tells them to stay quiet about what they saw until after Jesus has been raised from the dead
 - Naturally, the disciples are startled by the statement and wonder what He meant by rising from the dead
 - Jesus it would seem was already beginning to plant seeds with the disciples regarding the end of His ministry
 - Imagine Jesus' dilemma: He has to find a way to bring the disciples along in their understanding of what's about to happen in Jerusalem
 - They need to begin to understand that their Rabbi will die and be raised from the dead – and that this is necessary for the establishment of the kingdom
 - This would be totally new thinking for them – and radically different from what they expected
 - So as Mark records, Jesus begins to introduce to the disciples the fact of his eventual suffering and death.
- Then strangely, both Luke and Mark move directly into the account of the demonic boy
 - In fact, as soon as the healing is over, Jesus returns to a discussion of His death by telling the disciples that He expects to be handed over to the enemy and killed
 - Doesn't it seem odd that this rather important discussion about Jesus' death is suddenly cut off by what seems like another routine healing?
- Perhaps at first, yes, but if we look closely, we can see how this moment actually supports the larger discussion of Jesus' betrayal
 - First, remember the essence of the lesson that Jesus taught through the healing of the boy

- We saw last week that Jesus was frustrated at the lack of faith shown by His disciples in the face of one of the enemy's displays
- So He chastises the crowd and the disciples for their lack of faith in God's power,
- And in the course of healing the boy, Jesus proceeds to display the awesome power of God in such a dramatic way that the crowd stands amazed
- And now Jesus tells the disciples that the Enemy – the same enemy that Jesus so easily dispensed with - would gain the upper hand in Jerusalem and orchestrate Jesus' death
 - How absolutely bizarre that must have seemed to disciples
 - How can Jesus in one moment display such matchless power over the enemy and then in the next breath confess that this enemy would soon have the power to crush him?
- Well, as the text tells us, the disciples could reconcile these seemingly contradictory thoughts
 - In fact, verse 45 tells us that the statement was concealed from them in the moment
 - God – by withholding insight and understanding from the disciples – left them in this state of confusion
 - Which leaves us even more confused perhaps – why did the Lord go to the effort to tell the disciples something that He wasn't willing to let them understand?
 - The answer is that Jesus is planting seeds for another day, a day when the disciples will desperately need the understanding far more than they need it now
 - And in fact, if it were possible for them to fully grasp the truth in this moment, it would actually work against Jesus' purposes, in that they might have been prompted to try and stop the events God had ordained
- But one day soon, the understanding that eluded them here will be given them by the Holy Spirit, and when that time comes, it will be so very important

- Because on that day to come, they will see their Lord crucified on the cross, having been put to death by the efforts of the enemy working through the hard hearts of evil men
 - They will begin to wonder and doubt
 - They will begin to question whether this man was who He said He was
 - And to be worried whether God's power was truly capable of overcoming the enemy's power
 - And in their doubt, they will be tempted to forget all they were taught
 - For example, we know that Peter after the crucifixion reacted to Jesus' death as if the whole experience was over and nothing had been gained
 - He's so disappointed, he initially returns to fishing
 - Until Jesus appears to Him after His resurrection and coaxes him back to lead within the church
- So the shock of the crucifixion could easily leave the disciple wondering what it all meant
 - And then there are these words of Jesus that are brought back to mind in that moment
 - And when it does return to their minds, it will come with memories of that little boy tormented by the demon
 - And of Jesus' easy victory over the enemy
 - Followed by His promise foretelling how the enemy would be used to accomplish the Father's will
- At the end of Luke's gospel, as Christ appears to the disciples and proves to them that He has risen from the dead, these are his parting words as recorded by Luke:

[Luke 24:44](#) ¶ Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."

[Luke 24:45](#) Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,
[Luke 24:46](#) and He said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day,
[Luke 24:47](#) and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

- Don’t you think those words would have been so encouraging and stirring for the shaken disciples
 - Finally understanding how it all fits together
 - Seeing that Jesus hadn’t been defeated – far from it
 - He had demonstrated his victory over death and the Enemy
- But for now, the meaning is hidden and the disciples move on to a new thought

[Luke 9:46](#) ¶ An argument started among them as to which of them might be the greatest.

[Luke 9:47](#) But Jesus, knowing what they were thinking in their heart, took a child and stood him by His side,

[Luke 9:48](#) and said to them, “Whoever receives this child in My name receives Me, and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me; for the one who is least among all of you, this is the one who is great.”

- As the text presents it here, this discussion seems to come in the midst of what we already read
 - But as usual, a careful comparison of the gospels tells us more

[Mark 9:33](#) ¶ They came to Capernaum; and when He was in the house, He *began* to question them, “What were you discussing on the way?”

[Mark 9:34](#) But they kept silent, for on the way they had discussed with one another which *of them* was the greatest.

- So it was at a later time when this issue came up
- And it’s interesting that Luke has chosen to place this account here at this point in his account
 - In fact, as I read the gospels, there seems to be two separate times in which the disciples engaged in a discussion of who is the greatest

- We have this discussion here
- Then later in Chapter 22 of Luke we see it again, in the midst of the last supper
- Apparently the disciples were hungry for status and authority, yet they must have sensed that this thought was at the very least immodest and probably disrespectful to their teacher
- As Mark explains it, they were even a bit embarrassed at having been caught in the discussion
- There are actually two separate issues intertwined in this discussion, one of which Jesus addresses in these verses
 - And the other issue He addresses when the questions comes up the second time in Chap 22 – and we'll wait until that chapter to address it
 - As it happens, I recently taught on the verses in Chap 22 during my trip, so if you would like to know the second part of this message,...
- For today, we'll consider the issue Jesus addresses here
 - After hearing the disciples arguing about who will get to lead
 - And in this context – the context of a Rabbi and his students – the issue is one of who will be the greatest following in the model of Jesus
 - They want to know who will be considered the greatest Rabbi, one who selects students, teaches them, just as Jesus is doing
 - Part of the problem for the disciples here is not just the arrogance and pride of their discussion, but the fact that it reveals a complete lack of appreciation about what Jesus is preparing them for
 - We can best see that when we look at what Jesus says to them in response
- He brings a young child near to Him, and uses the child as an example
 - He says that the one who is willing to receive a child – accept a child as one of their followers – would be greatest

- Because by accepting a child, the disciples would be accepting Jesus Himself – and therefore the Father
- How does this follow?
 - Well, remember that a child was the least significant member of society, the one with the least status and the least value
 - Now imagine a disciple trying his hand for the first time at being the teacher, the rabbi
 - And as this disciple travels around the countryside looking for students, men he could call into his ministry, men who would accept his call and commit to follow the disciple, learn from, him and obey him
 - Just as the disciples followed and obeyed Jesus and called Him master
- Now imagine that disciple was only able to attract children to follow him
 - His only students were little boys and girls
 - It would be a humiliating outcome
 - A Rabbi who accepted – who received – children as his students would be considered a laughing stock, a man who's ministry was a complete failure – according to the world's standards
- And now here's Jesus responding to the disciples' debate about who would be the greatest by telling them that the greatest is the one who receives a child and counts it as success
- Consider the point Jesus is making here
 - While the disciples were busy trying to decide who would be the greatest teacher, who would attract the greatest following
 - Jesus is cutting them down to size by saying that the one willing to be content with a following of children would be the greatest
 - He's contending with their pride - causing them to reconsider what really matters in ministry

- But there's even more going on here – more probably than even the disciples understood in the moment
 - Because Jesus' comment about receiving children is more significant than merely a jab at the disciples' pride
 - These men, in a very real sense, were going to attract a following of children
 - In Matt's account, we can see this second side to Jesus' statement

[Matt. 18:3](#) and said, "Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

[Matt. 18:4](#) "Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

[Matt. 18:5](#) "And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me;

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- The disciples were, in fact, going to attract children
 - Men and women who were willing and able to become like children
 - Like children in a spiritual sense, born again and soft hearted
 - People willing to be confess their unworthiness before God, to become humble and obedient, to recognize that they have nothing to offer of value – like children
 - And, like a child dependent on his parents, they must be willing to rely exclusively on the grace of God for the gift of eternal life in the kingdom
 - This would be the new mark of a faithful believer – which was a radical departure from the proud, pious nature associated with the Pharisees – men who appeared to portray godliness
 - Can you see how hard it was for Jesus to refashion in the disciples' minds what true righteousness would look like?
 - And the disciples had to understand the difference, otherwise they would be seek after the wrong thing – the very thing Jesus came to tear down

- And these spiritual children are the ones the disciples were not only to be willing to accept, but they were the ones the disciples should seek after
- Jesus' explanation of the nature of new believers was one of several important points Luke records at the end of Chapter 9 –
 - The beginning of Jesus' final preparation of the disciples for their role as ambassadors for the gospel
 - Chap 9 of Luke's gospel marks the end of the early years of Jesus' ministry, and Chap 10 marks the beginning of Jesus preparation to die on the cross
 - He's already spent the better part of 3 years with the disciples
 - He is on the verge of withdrawing his offer of the kingdom to the Jewish nation and moving directly toward his death on the cross
 - And as this shift begins, Luke records a few critical lessons for the disciples concerning the nature of the ministry Jesus was preparing to hand over to them
- For example, look at the next series of verses

[Luke 9:49](#) ¶ John answered and said, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name; and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow along with us."

[Luke 9:50](#) But Jesus said to him, "Do not hinder *him*; for he who is not against you is for you."

- On the heels of Jesus' statement that the disciples must be prepared to draw the least of the world rather than the best
 - John complains to Jesus that others are attempting to work in His name, though they don't follow Jesus as a disciple
 - And Jesus tells John essentially to get over it
 - Those who are working toward the same goals are on your side, don't oppose them
- At first, it seems very selfish and childish that John would care that others were working to advance the message that Jesus brought
 - John's comments sound petty

- But we need to remember that the disciples are simply working from an understanding built from years of experience in their own culture
 - Rabbis often cultivated their own sects within the Jewish faith
 - And they selected their disciples carefully – it was an exclusive club
 - And when someone claimed to be a disciple when they hadn't been invited was an offensive against those who had been selected
 - Think of it like this...
 - You had won the Master golf tournament, and as a winner you were allowed to wear the green jacket and granted membership to play golf at the exclusive Georgia club
 - Then one day, you saw someone make their own green jacket and walk onto the course to play
 - You would be incensed
 - You would demand that the person be removed, since they were not worthy of the honor that you had won legitimately
- That's essentially what John was complaining about...men who were acting as Jesus disciples but yet weren't worthy the honor
 - Here again Jesus take the opportunity to correct their thinking
 - Those who act according to God's will are already on your team – and it is God's discretion to appoint those He wishes
 - The Disciples were to understand that this wasn't going to be an exclusive club of people
 - This was a club of misfits and God was the one who determined membership
 - Look what Jesus says in the next chapter:

[Luke 10:21](#) ¶ At that very time He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit, and said, "I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the*

wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight.

- The kingdom would be populated by those who are not honored and esteemed and worthy
 - It will not be populated by the wise, the mighty, the ones the world honored
 - It will be populated by the children of this world
 - The unworthy, the humble, the meek
 - And the disciples are just beginning to comprehend what it means to follow Jesus and build the kingdom of God
 - Jesus teaches the apostles to see all those who work for the same goal as part of the same family, the family of God made so by the Holy Spirit
 - And they can't rely on the worldly standards for determining worthiness to be part of the club - for no one is worthy on his own merit
 - We all come into the family of God by God's grace – by His mercy