

Luke 9F

- Today Luke begins to document Jesus' long trek toward the cross
 - When we look at the Luke's gospel and then add to it Luke's other major contribution to the Biblical record, the book of Acts, we can see his focus clearly
 - In his gospel, Luke spends tremendous time developing the events leading up to Jesus' death,
 - In particular, the battle between Jesus and the Pharisees and the preparation of the disciples for ministry
 - And then in Acts, Luke begins records the work of the disciples after the ascension and the continuing battle between them and the same spiritual darkness of the enemy that had tried to crush Jesus
- As we end Chapter 9 today and enter Chapter 10, we'll see Luke begin to point the reader to that transition, to the death of Jesus and the continuing ministry of the apostles

[Luke 9:51](#) ¶ When the days were approaching for His ascension, He was determined to go to Jerusalem;

[Luke 9:52](#) and He sent messengers on ahead of Him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for Him.

[Luke 9:53](#) But they did not receive Him, because He was traveling toward Jerusalem.

[Luke 9:54](#) When His disciples James and John saw *this*, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?"

[Luke 9:55](#) But He turned and rebuked them, [and said, "You do not know what kind of spirit you are of;

[Luke 9:56](#) for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."]
And they went on to another village.

- Up to this point in Luke's gospel, you should have noticed that Jesus was essentially wandering in the desert of the Galilee
 - He moved around from town to town, often returning to places multiple times to teach and perform miracles

- And though His travels were not without a purpose, they certainly seemed to have no clear direction
- But now, His travel is focused on a single direction: Jerusalem
- I love the way Luke starts this transition
 - He says “when the days for His ascension were approaching”
 - The reason I like this phrase is that it places the emphasis on Jesus purpose squarely on His glorification rather than dwelling on his death
 - He was going to Jerusalem to ascend not merely to die
 - To be sure, death had to precede the ascension
 - But it reminds us that Jesus didn’t come to earth as a man just to die
 - He came to die so that He could be resurrected and ascend to the right hand of the Father
 - And by His ascension, He demonstrated that He does truly have the power over death
 - And by displaying that power, He proves Himself to be the One in whom we should trust for our own eternal life
 - We want to trust the right source for eternal life
 - Jesus is the One who proved Himself trustworthy in all matters, including in having the power of life over death
 - Budda, Muhammed, Confucious, etc.
 - But Jesus came from heaven to earth for the express purpose of returning

[John 3:12](#) “If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?”

[John 3:13](#) “No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man.

[John 6:62](#) “*What* then if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before?”

- One of the criticisms I remember reading about the Passion of Christ was that it placed all its emphasis on the death of Christ with virtually no attention given to the resurrection nor its meaning
 - Because the death of Christ without the resurrection is meaningless – it would offer no hope
 - Instead, we have the assurance of eternal life because we know by the eye witness accounts recording in scripture that Jesus rose and lived again and promised the same opportunity to all who believe in Him
- And so Luke says Jesus was determined to go to Jerusalem
 - He sends messengers ahead of him
 - What Jesus is doing here is essentially the same you and I do today when we travel
 - Before setting out on a road trip, we call ahead to make reservations at the local inn
 - But no phones or internet, so messengers were sent to make arrangements
- So these messengers – not the disciples – went ahead and picked a Samaritan village to find lodging
 - Samaria was a region south of the Galilee, directly between the Galilee and Jerusalem
 - The people living in the region of Samaria were called the Samaritans
 - They were Semitic people descended from Abraham, and so they could be called Jews
 - When the northern Kingdom of Israel was captured by the Assyrians in 722 BC, there were a small group of Jews who remained behind in the land – not all Jews were rounded up and removed from the land
 - And this small band of Jews eventually began to intermarry with the Assyrians who began to enter and occupy the land after the nation of Israel had been captured

- When the descendents of the Jews taken into exile finally returned to the land, they refused to accept the Jews who had remained behind and intermarried as true descendents of Abraham any longer
 - They rejected Samaritans because the Samaritans had not kept to a purely Jewish bloodline
 - This set up a bitter and often violent rivalry between the two groups as to who the true descendents of Abraham were
 - Eventually, the Samaritans rejected virtually all things Jewish
 - They rejected all the writings of the Jewish prophets other than the Torah
 - They rejected Jerusalem as the seat of authority and established their own temple in Samaria
 - Consequently, the Jews and the Samaritans would have nothing to do with one another – treating each other as if they were Gentiles – unworthy of even being spoken to
- So when the messengers enter the Samaritan town and try to make room arrangements, we can see how it went
 - When the innkeeper found out that Jesus was traveling to worship in Jerusalem, they refused him lodging
 - If He had been traveling to worship in Samaria, they would have been willing to let him stay
- When Jesus reached the village with His disciples and they learned of the rejection, the disciples reacted angrily and asked if they should call down fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans
 - We can sympathize with the disciples
 - When you've been on the road all day and you reach the hotel only to find they lost your reservation, we would all enjoy the thought of watching the hotel go up in flame
 - But that's not the right reaction

- Their suggestion of bringing fire down is rather comical actually
 - They are making reference to 2 Kings 17 where Elijah calls down fire from heaven to destroy the false prophets in his day
 - Do the disciples think they have this power? I would say no, they didn't
 - Rather they were asking for such power to satisfy their own selfish hatred
 - They wanted Jesus to give them that power so they could use it for their own purposes – to destroy their enemies
- The disciples reaction is largely driven by their hatred of the Samaritan people
 - And their rejection of the Messiah simply adds fuel to the fire, no pun intended
- Jesus rebukes them, we're told (epitomao – a stern warning)
 - He says He had not come to destroy lives but to save them
 - Again, reminding the disciples that Jesus' first coming was about the offer of the kingdom and salvation to all who believe
 - The time of judgment awaits His return
- The disciples request of Jesus reveals an interesting point along their path to spiritual maturity
 - It's like the saying that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing
 - The disciples had just enough knowledge at this point in their ministry under Jesus to appreciate a few things
 - They knew Jesus was the Messiah, the Christ
 - They knew that men must accept Him
 - They knew that God desired to work through men to display His power and reveal His Son
 - They knew that in faith they could be used by God to do miraculous things

- But yet, they still lacked the big picture – a full understanding of what Jesus taught on the kingdom, on righteousness and on the purpose of His ministry to save all men by faith – not just the Jew
- So while they exist in this in between state, knowing some thing and yet ignorant about many others, they were actually more dangerous in some ways than when they were still completely ignorant and even unbelievers
 - Here they were prepared to destroy an entire city of people on the basis of how they responded to Jesus request for lodging – even though they had presumably not yet even heard about Jesus or His teaching
 - How wrong they would have been to place themselves in the role of judge, since that role belongs to God alone according to scripture
- And even if we aren't in the habit of asking for the power to bring fire down on our enemies – though some of us might have done it a few times – consider how we ourselves make this same mistake from time to time
 - In my experience, Christians are forever proving and reproofing the adage that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing
 - We gain a limited understanding of scripture, of Christian doctrine, of the purpose and call upon God has placed upon our lives
 - Then we stop learning, stop listening, stop following
 - We get busy (eg), we get distracted, we get bored, we get offended
 - And we get away from the learning process that God says should be life long
 - Or maybe we have the opposite problem – we get too excited
 - That's what the disciples are doing here
 - They are so excited by the prospect of their ministry under Jesus, they are ready to jump forward without all the facts

- They haven't learned near enough, they haven't experienced near enough, and here they are ready to jump out and barbeque entire town
- Now consider this:
 - The disciples lived all day, everyday with Jesus in the flesh for nearly three years at this point.
 - They saw His miracles firsthand
 - They heard His teaching from His mouth
 - They had the chance to ask questions
 - They had an intimate knowledge of the OT and of Jewish culture
 - And after that much time and experience, they are still lacking so much understanding and self-control, they are dangerous to Christ's mission
 - Jesus says that they don't even know what kind of spirit they speak from
 - He is saying that they are doing the work of the enemy by harboring such thoughts

[Luke 9:55](#) But He turned and rebuked them, [and said, "You do not know what kind of spirit you are of;

- These guys aren't just a little wrong – they are doing the work of the enemy!
- So now, we should ask ourselves – do we think we've got enough training to serve God effectively in our life?
 - Have we studied enough?
 - Do we know Jesus heart well enough?
 - Do we know God's will well enough?
 - Have we spent enough time with the Father through His word and in prayer to be useful to Him or are we merely dangerous

- Well, consider that the disciples had so long with him, and yet by this point they're still so far away
- I know I can often be tempted to think that because I've attended or even taught a few Bible studies, or because I spend 90 minutes in church once a week or pray here and there, that I should be ready to be used by God
 - Then I wonder why God isn't doing more in me and through me
 - Maybe it's a blessing that God hasn't elected to ask more of me, considering how dangerous I might be were He to do that
- But don't forget that Jesus had already begun to use the disciples despite their limited understanding – and that's the encouragement for us today
 - We are going to make the same dumb mistakes the disciples did – we're going to be rash, impulsive, and we're even going to go in directions that serve the enemy rather than God
 - But God doesn't give up on us, and He continues to use us, even as he continues to train us up in His ways
 - As long as we don't think we can rest on what we already know, thinking we've got it all together, then God is pleased to continue the training process even as He works through us

[Luke 9:57](#) ¶ As they were going along the road, someone said to Him, "I will follow You wherever You go."

[Luke 9:58](#) And Jesus said to him, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air *have* nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."

[Luke 9:59](#) And He said to another, "Follow Me." But he said, "Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father."

[Luke 9:60](#) But He said to him, "Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God."

[Luke 9:61](#) Another also said, "I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home."

[Luke 9:62](#) But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

- As Jesus continues toward Jerusalem, Luke strings together a number of what were probably isolated exchanges between Jesus and people He met along the way

- It's unlikely that all these encounters happened at the same time or even along the same journey, since Matt and Mark record that some of these comments happened at other points in Jesus ministry
- But it could be that many of these comments were a part of Jesus walk to Jerusalem
- In any case, let's look at what's going on in each situation Luke captured
 - Someone tells Jesus I will follow you wherever you go
 - Do you get the feeling Jesus probably heard this a lot?
 - I do. I think Jesus must have had all kinds of bizarre offers, requests, pledges, promises, etc.
 - People must have come along and pledged their loyalty to Jesus in the same way this person did
- And Jesus gives an interesting response
 - He says even animals have the benefit of a home, a place to retreat at the end of the day – a place to rest
 - But Jesus was never to experience that kind of resting place during His first experience on earth
 - Far from it...Jesus would forever be without the peace of a home, a place that was truly a resting place
 - And anyone who would desire to call himself a disciple had to expect a similar burden
 - Look at the apostles...
 - None of them lived a "normal" life
 - Many of them moved about to spread the gospel
 - They were persecuted, which drive them to live a life of constant turmoil
 - They constantly looked beyond this world to a life that came afterward – to their true home

[Heb. 11:13](#) ¶ All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

[Heb. 11:14](#) For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own.

[Heb. 11:15](#) And indeed if they had been thinking of that *country* from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return.

[Heb. 11:16](#) But as it is, they desire a better *country*, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.

- Jesus point to the man, of course, was if you want to follow, you better be prepared for what it means
 - You need to be prepared for a life that forsakes completely – if necessary – the normal life of this world
- His next two comments build on this theme
 - The first man says I'll follow, but give me a chance to wait until my father dies
 - Now you might have assumed that the man's father had just died and he needed time to prepare the funeral, but that's not likely
 - In Jewish culture – much as it is today among Muslims in the Middle East, the dead must be buried within 24 hours of death
 - In Jesus day this made great sense, because the decomposition of the body occurred so quickly in a hot climate
 - So if the man is saying allow me to bury my father first, it's unlikely he's saying that his father has already died
 - More likely, he's telling Jesus he needs time to wait for his father to pass away, and then as a son he would have opportunity to do the honorable thing and bury his father
 - Jesus says allow the dead to bury their dead
 - The dead here refers to the spiritually dead – allow those who are unbelievers to go on living the life they consider normal
 - But if you have been awaken spiritually, if you know that this world isn't what's normal

- Rather this world is passing away – it is only temporary – it should not be your focus or the thing you invest your time in
- Then you should be willing to leave it behind, even the traditions the world holds dear, like burying family member – if in fact God has called you to proclaim the good news
- Then a man asks if he can have even enough time to say goodbye to family
 - This hardly seems like an unreasonable request, right?
 - Surely saying goodbye isn't a bad thing
- But Jesus chastises the person and compares them to a farmer who begins to plow the field and then looks longingly back at the easy life in the farm house
 - Jesus says that anyone who begins to do the hard work of ministry and then gives thought of the life they left behind – even for a second – is not truly a disciple
 - No one who truly understands the gospel and responds to the call of faith ever looks back longingly for the life they had prior to knowing Christ
- In light of where Jesus was headed in His journey – to the cross – it makes perfect sense to see Luke begin Jesus' rip with these three statements
 - Jesus was playing for keeps
 - He was willing to place His very life on the line – to allow Himself to be tortured and killed for the sake of the kingdom
 - And to truly follow Him required a willingness to forsake the comfort of this world
 - To forsake the cares of this world
 - To forsake a desire for this world
 - And to look only forward – forward to eternity in the kingdom

- A true transformation – to become a new creation
- Are we together in this work? Have we all understood the call of faith and understood it in the way the Bible teaches it?
 - Do we all share the same single-mindedness for where our true home lies?
 - Do we truly understand the sacrifices God may ask us to make in our walk of faith
 - Have we put aside the cares of this world
 - And have we forsaken pursuing the pleasures of this corrupt and dying world
 - Or are we trying to live with one foot in two worlds?
 - Jesus says that if His answers to these three questions cause us to wonder about our own commitment to Him, then now is the time to stop wondering
 - Stop fooling ourselves
 - It's time we made up our mind for sure, put our shoulders to the plow and pressed forward – trusting in Christ, believing in His word and becoming His disciple