

Luke 9C

- When you look at Chapter 9 of Luke, you might come to the conclusion that
 - The first half is devoted to demonstrations of Jesus' power as God to heal and provide
 - While the second half is devoted to discussions of Jesus' future martyrdom and glorification
 - And that would be reasonable
- But I believe there is a larger purpose in view here, once that centers as much on the disciples as on Jesus Himself
 - In the first have, Jesus is demonstrating His power as God before the disciples to encourage them to see how God will intend to work through them in growing and providing for His church
 - The disciples must have looked back upon these lessons as great encouragement, especially when they were confronted with so many challenges in the early church
- Now we enter into essentially the second half of Chapter 9, where Luke begins to highlight the theme of Christ's coming death and the disciples life walking in Jesus' place
 - You know, this is such a great opportunity for us to learn from Jesus Himself what it means to be His follower

[Luke 9:23](#) ¶ And He was saying to *them* all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.

[Luke 9:24](#) "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.

[Luke 9:25](#) "For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?

[Luke 9:26](#) "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and *the glory* of the Father and of the holy angels.

- Let's begin by breaking down this famous passage, beginning with verse 23
 - Jesus, we're told begins to speak "to them all"
 - And "all" here must mean the disciples – not the crowd in general, but His disciples
 - In other words, there are words for those who are professing allegiance and a desire to follow Christ – not merely those who are considering Jesus, those who are merely spectators
- Jesus comment in verse 23 comes immediately after his stunning announcement in verse 22 that He must be rejected and suffer and die
 - Can you imagine the looks on the faces of the disciples when they heard Jesus speak the words of verse 22?
 - There must have been a mixture of disbelief, confusion, distress, maybe fear
 - And Jesus turns from His comment in verse 22 to look the disciples in eyes, and say with great conviction...
 - "If anyone...
 - In that moment, I imagine there were at least a few disciples who might have begun to rethink following Jesus...to question whether this was what they wanted
 - And Jesus gives them the straight truth
 - He tells them that if the thought of Jesus dying bothers them, then they ought to know that the same possibility if not inevitability exists for each one of them
- Look at what Jesus says to them...
 - If you are going to follow me, you had better be prepared to pick up your cross
 - What does that phrase mean? How did it strike the apostles I wonder?
- Actually, I was interested to see what other preachers have said about this phrase, because it's so well known and it's loaded with shades of meaning

- Or example, I found this comment taken from the sermon of one preacher:

Jesus' call to take up our cross and follow is a vision to keep us on the path. When we shrink away, it's because we don't believe our voices and actions can make a difference. But if we stop pursuing justice, peace, healing and wholeness, for our lives and for our world, we become supporters of that which we oppose."

- This kind of general spiritualization of Jesus' words is typical of what I found
 - And while I can't quarrel with this teaching, I do have to wonder about whether this is really Jesus' point when he spoke to the disciples?
 - Consider some details about Jesus' comment:
 - First Jesus has just told the disciples he expected to be put to death
 - More than that, Jesus said he MUST suffer and die
 - And the disciples would have naturally assumed that they would be in jeopardy too, simply by association
- Secondly, I want you to remember what a cross meant in that culture
 - Today we hear Jesus' statement with an appreciation of how closely connected it would be with His ministry
 - The cross has become the symbol of Christianity
 - But to the disciples, the cross had only one meaning
 - It was a symbol of an ugly death
 - The Roman style of execution had its origins in Persia or Greece 700 years earlier
 - But the Romans commonly made their prisoners carry the cross beam of the crucifix to the place of execution
 - So when Jesus said that to be His disciple, you must deny yourself and take up your cross to follow Him, He was communicating only one thought

- To anyone who heard Him, he was affirming the reality of their own persecution
- Jesus was saying that following Me means you must be prepared for death if necessary
- After all, look at Jesus' next statements
 - If you are more interested in preserving your earthly life than obtaining eternal life, what you hope to gain in an earthly sense you are actually losing in an eternal sense
 - To do so is to be ashamed of Jesus and He will then be ashamed of you when He comes in glory
- What could we possibly gain by remaining alive in this world a day longer that we might be willing to exchange for eternal life? Nothing!
- Later in this gospel, Luke records a similar statement from Christ,

[Luke 14:26](#) "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.

[Luke 14:27](#) "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple

- There is even more we could say from what Luke records in chapter 14, but we'll wait to get there.
 - Meanwhile, we can see the connection with our text here this morning,
 - Jesus says that we must be willing, if necessary, to forsake all that this world holds – even a relationship with our family if necessary – in order to follow Him
 - To which He repeats the phrase, we must be willing to pick up our cross
- This is a sobering statement, wouldn't you agree?
 - I thought Christianity was sunshine and roses, happiness and victory
 - Jesus is saying, no...it very well could be rejection, loneliness, suffering, and even death

- As I was researching for this lesson, I learned that in the Sudan, a country that borders Kenya, literally thousands of Christian Sudanese have been nailed to crude crosses in the Sudanese plains
 - The Arab network Al Jazeera reported in 2002 that 32 Christian ministers and other males had been crucified, include some in their early teens. They were whipped severely and then nailed to crosses with 6 inch nails through their arms and legs
 - My point here is not to disturb you but to make the point that Christ's statement to the apostles is just as relevant today
 - To be His follower means to be willing to suffer such things, because nothing in this life is worth forsaking eternity
- Do you seen how Jesus has just ratcheted up the seriousness of this business with the disciples?
 - If they had been thinking that walking away from fishing and tax collecting and following after Jesus was just some kind of new career move, maybe an exciting diversion from everyday life
 - Maybe the apostles were just playing around with the idea of being a rabbi like Jesus
 - Maybe they just liked the idea of being able to attract large crowds..
 - Whatever they were thinking, Jesus is telling them it's time they grew up and understood what being Christian means
 - These men were going to see many of the same things that Jesus saw
 - Many of the apostles were beaten, imprisoned, stoned, driven out of towns
 - They were despised, they were mocked, they had no life as others around them enjoyed
 - They completely sacrificed the normal life experience that others around them took for granted
 - And they gave all that up because Jesus called them to do it...and He said that if they shrunk back from that responsibility, they would be trading discomfort in this life for an eternity of hell

- So are WE to do with this statement?
 - On the one hand, I'm fairly confident that the main point for us here is not what I read from the previous sermon
 - We're not just looking at some generalized exhortation to march onward despite life's difficulties, blah, blah, blah
 - True as all that may be, Jesus was talking about life or death with these men, so I can't see turning his statements into some kind of Christianity light
 - It's not merely a matter of "Let's all work together and we can make a difference."
 - Jesus was talking to 12 men who He knew were going to experience many of the same persecutions He suffered
 - And He wanted them to understand – to – count- the cost of being His disciple.
 - He wanted them to have their eyes open to what lay ahead
- For us today I think the message is more directly relevant to how we bring the good news to others
 - He is making clear that not only will His ministry bring His own death
 - But He is telling the disciples that they too must be willing to be humiliated, to suffer and even to die as a result of following Him
- There is no soft sell here for Jesus
 - Nor should there be one for coming from us when we present the Gospel message
 - This isn't a game, like the one they play with you at the car dealership
 - What do I have to do to get you into this new car today?
 - Every person who experiences a calling to faith should be prepared for discipleship with the stark reality of what it means to forsake the world and follow Jesus

- Do you think those Sudanese men who were crucified understood the risks when they came to know Christ?
- Just as many other Christians do around the world
- But we're so polite here we can stand the thought of ever putting someone on the spot about whether they are willing to accept the costs of their faith
 - If you live the life of a disciple, you will bear a cross
 - You will not be accepted by the world

[John 15:19](#) "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.

[John 15:20](#) "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

- Somewhere in the process of discipline new believers, we should begin to explain the cost of belief
 - We owe them that
 - And especially because as the costs become evident, we will be able to know if their hearts are true – if their confessions are true
- Unbelievers join and remain in churches without ever having true faith because it's so easy, so undemanding
 - But when real disciple ship is expected and when the costs are explained, you'll begin to see who's serious and who's not
 - And that was Jesus' point here
- In fact, Jesus is so serious, He has decided to reveal Himself in a special way to three of these men

[Luke 9:27](#) "But I say to you truthfully, there are some of those standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God."

[Luke 9:28](#) ¶ Some eight days after these sayings, He took along Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray.

[Luke 9:29](#) And while He was praying, the appearance of His face became different, and His clothing *became* white *and* gleaming.

[Luke 9:30](#) And behold, two men were talking with Him; and they were Moses and Elijah, [Luke 9:31](#) who, appearing in glory, were speaking of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

[Luke 9:32](#) Now Peter and his companions had been overcome with sleep; but when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men standing with Him.

[Luke 9:33](#) And as these were leaving Him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles: one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah”—not realizing what he was saying.

[Luke 9:34](#) While he was saying this, a cloud formed and *began* to overshadow them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud.

[Luke 9:35](#) Then a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!”

[Luke 9:36](#) And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent, and reported to no one in those days any of the things which they had seen.

- This is such a powerful scene, and not one I can fully examine with you today
 - I will introduce some of its major themes and then pick up again here in two weeks when we return to Luke
- Let’s begin with some observation concerning the scene
 - Jesus leaves the earlier conversation with the comment that some in the group would see the kingdom of God before experiencing death
 - As you may know, this statement has caused tremendous confusion in some Christian circles where it has been used incorrectly to teach that the kingdom Jesus promised arrived in 70 AD when the temple and Jerusalem were destroyed by the Romans
 - This view is amillennialist, which does not believe that there will be a true 1,000 year reign of Christ on earth, but rather the current time is the kingdom that Jesus promised
 - One of the things they point to is this verse
- What Jesus meant is so clearly demonstrated by the text itself
 - About a week later, Jesus takes Peter, John and James up a mountain
 - *Addendum: Audio incorrectly states James was the leader of the church in Jerusalem. This was in fact James the half-brother of Jesus. James, son of Zebedee, was the first apostle martyred (see Acts 12:2)*

- And Jesus begins to pray and the other men fall asleep, which was typical
 - They were the most sleep deprived but of guys I've ever known
- They awake to see Jesus with Moses and Elijah, all three glorified
- The fact that this event comes immediately after the earlier conversation makes clear that this is the event Jesus was talking about
 - These men are seeing the Kingdom before them
 - Look in verse 29
 - Jesus' appearance is completely different
 - He didn't just light up, his face is different
 - This is similar to the description that John gives of Jesus when Jesus reveals himself to John in Revelation

[Rev. 1:14](#) His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire.

[Rev. 1:15](#) His feet *were* like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice *was* like the sound of many waters.

[Rev. 1:16](#) In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.

- Peter, John and James are given the privilege of seeing Jesus as He will appear in the kingdom of God
 - In fact, it's important to consider that to see Jesus in this way is to see the kingdom of God – not just a piece of it – but all of it
- The next important observation is to understand what it means that Moses and Elijah are standing with Jesus
- First, what were they doing with Jesus
 - Luke alone tells us that they were talking with Jesus about all that must happen in Jerusalem
 - It's possible that they are offering words of comfort to Jesus concerning him impending trial, but I can't accept that notion
 - I can't see how Jesus could be accepting advice and encouragement from men

- He was the perfect obedient Son of God who had the Holy Spirit and the Father comforting Him in all He did
- I think a better explanation is that these men were being used as prophets by God to relay information to Jesus concerning the events that occur
 - Remember, Jesus is limited by his human form, and so God the Father is communicating to His Son through His Spirit and apparently through these prophets
 - It may also be the case that the conversation was purely for the benefit of the three disciples, that they might know about the coming passion of Jesus
- But the conversation was merely a piece of the puzzle – what is the main reason why these men were there
 - First we should understand that these men were immensely important figures in the Jewish consciousness, though I doubt their complete significance was understood by the disciples in the moment
 - By the way, do you wonder how they knew who these men were?
 - There were no pictures of Moses or Elijah in their wallets
 - My wife says they probably wore those “Hi, My name is Moses” names tags
- What is the significance of these men at this moment
 - Well, consider each for what we know of their lives
 - Moses was the redeemer of God’s people – the man who brought the nation through the trials of the desert
 - But He died before the journey was complete, though no one ever found Moses body

[Deut. 34:5](#) So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD.

[Deut. 34:6](#) And He buried him in the valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor; but no man knows his burial place to this day.

- So Moses is a type of Christ in his redemptive work and in how His body will not be found afterward

- Then there's Elijah
 - God predicted that it would be Elijah in the end times who would bring the hearts of his people back to their God

[Mal. 4:5](#) ¶ “Behold, I am going to send you **Elijah** the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD.

- Secondly, Elijah's life ends when God ushers him straight into heaven

[2Kings 2:11](#) As they were going along and talking, behold, *there appeared* a chariot of fire and horses of fire which separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven.

- So here's the connection
 - Jesus is seen standing next to the two men who God has used to depict the two fold nature of Christ's ministry
 - On the one hand Moses depicting Christ's redemption of God's people by His death
 - And Elijah representing Jesus' resurrection and ascension in glory
- Even Luke's choice of words in verse 31 suggests the symbolism in this moment
 - Departure is exodus, communicating the larger significance of Jesus coming departure – the departure was the resurrection – a new exodus for God's people
- When we pick up here again in two weeks, we will look at the disciples' reaction to this scene, and particularly Peter's poorly worded statements
 - But for now, let's dwell on the scene Luke has painted
 - Jesus in His glory – our Lord returned, chatting casually with two men who served Him well in their day
 - Consider with me right now, that you and I will one day do the same thing
 - We will have that opportunity

- We will have a chance to be in Jesus presence and to worship Him, but I'm convinced that we will also have plenty of time over the 1000 years of life on earth with Him to stand and speak with him like Moses and Elijah did
 - To stand and speak with Moses and Elijah for that matter
 - To ask The men of old what their lives were like
 - TO appreciate all the intricate detail God has woven to put all of time and history together for our sakes
- Let those thoughts get you excited, because that's what the scripture tells us to do
 - Look forward to that day that's promised ot each of us
 - Look forward with joy, and excitement, and let it motivate you to serve Him all the better even now
 - TO Love Him all the more and to show that same love to others in His name