

29. Jesus Sent Out the Twelve

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand why Jesus told some of the people He healed not to tell anyone exactly what had happened. Jesus did this especially where the crowds showed their unbelief. We saw that Jesus healed both a woman that had an incurable physical problem and raised a young girl from the dead. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus sent out the Twelve to give them some on-the-job training. We will also see that Jesus gave the Twelve some very specific instructions as they went out to tell others the good news.

Luke 9:1-6 says, “Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. And He said to them, ‘Take nothing for the journey, neither staffs nor bag nor bread nor money; and do not have two tunics apiece. Whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. And whoever will not receive you, when you go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet as a testimony against them.’ So they departed and went through the towns, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.” Jesus had taken the disciples with Him to show them how to minister. Now, He was sending them out for the first time to do the things they had learned.

However, Jesus gave the disciples instructions before He sent them out to minister. He told them that He had given them power over both demons and diseases. He said that they were to preach the kingdom of God as well as heal the sick. Then, Jesus gave them specific instructions about the things that they were not to take. One of the key lessons that people learning to serve the Lord need to learn is to trust the Lord to supply their needs. As a result, Jesus told them not to take anything extra. They were not to take extra staffs (walking sticks). They were not to take a leather sack to carry their food. They were not to take food. They were not to take money. They were not to take extra clothes. Philippians 4:19 says, “And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” The disciples had to learn that they could trust the Lord to supply things as they were needed for effective future ministry.

Next, Jesus told them to stay in one home the entire time they were in that town. Matthew 10:11 says, “Now whatever city or town you enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and stay there till you go out.” In each town, the first thing that they were to do was to find out who was worthy (respected). Then, they were to stay with that family as long as they were in that town. A respected person opens doors and builds bridges that help you to make contacts with the rest of the people of the town. Jesus knew that the people of some towns would not receive them. Jesus told the Twelve that instead of feeling rejected in such towns they were to shake off the dust from their sandals as a testimony against the people of that town or city. To the Jews in that town, this was a visible sign that they were like Gentiles who did not trust and obey the Lord. In this way, the disciples learned not to take rejection of the Gospel personally; they realized that following Jesus meant that some people would reject them because they spoke about Jesus. The disciples then left in teams of two and went through the various towns preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God and healing people wherever they went.

Luke 9:7-9 says, “Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done by Him; and he was perplexed, because it was said by some that John had risen from the dead, and by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the old prophets had risen again. Herod said, ‘John I have beheaded, but who is this of whom I hear such things?’ So he sought to see Him.” Herod was really confused as he heard about the things that Jesus was doing. Some people told Herod that God must have raised John the Baptist from the dead and that he was doing all of these miracles. Malachi 4:5-6 says, “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.” As a result, others said that Elijah had come back to earth since he had not died and was doing these miracles. A third group said that one of the Old Testament prophets must have risen.

Herod heard all of these different opinions. However, Herod was being convicted by his own conscience. He had chosen to put John the Baptist to death by cutting off his head. Mark 6:16 says, “But when Herod heard, he said, ‘This is John, whom I beheaded; he has been raised from the dead!’” When a person has a guilty conscience, their conscience keeps convicting a person and that person has great guilt. That was what caused Herod to immediately think that it must be John. As a result of this guilty conscience, Herod had a great desire to see Jesus. He wanted to see for himself whether this was John or not.

Meanwhile, while Herod was thinking these thoughts, the Twelve had returned to Jesus after their ministry in the different towns. Luke 9:10-11 says, “And the apostles, when they had returned, told Him all that they had done. Then He took them and went aside privately into a deserted place belonging to the city called Bethsaida. But when the multitudes knew *it*, they followed Him; and He received them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who had need of healing.” The disciples were very excited as they told Jesus about what had happened as they visited the various towns. Mark 6:30-31 says, “Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught. And He said to them, ‘Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.’ For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.” Here, we see that they told Jesus both about the miracles that they had done and the message that they had taught.

Jesus then told the disciples that it was time for all of them to take a break and go out into the desert so that they could be alone. Jesus provided an example for the disciples of the fact that when things get very busy, we need to take some time to get away for a few hours. This time away provided rest for the disciples but it also gave them time to discuss the things that they had learned from their ministry trips. The disciples only had a few hours to rest, because the multitude heard and followed Jesus and his disciples to the deserted place where they had gone. As a result, when the multitudes reached the place where Jesus and the disciples were talking together, Jesus received the people and spoke to them about the kingdom of God. He also healed those who needed to be healed.

Luke 9:12-17 says, “When the day began to wear away, the twelve came and said to Him, ‘Send

the multitude away, that they may go into the surrounding towns and country, and lodge and get provisions; for we are in a deserted place here.’ But He said to them, ‘You give them something to eat.’ And they said, ‘We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless we go and buy food for all these people.’ For there were about five thousand men. Then He said to His disciples, ‘Make them sit down in groups of fifty.’ And they did so, and made them all sit down. Then He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke them, and gave *them* to the disciples to set before the multitude. So they all ate and were filled, and twelve baskets of the leftover fragments were taken up by them.” The people spent most of the day listening to Jesus.

In the late afternoon, the disciples came to Jesus and told Him to send the people away so that they could go into the surrounding towns to buy food for themselves. The disciples said that they were in a deserted place and there was no place for the people to buy food or find a place to stay overnight. Jesus did not send the people away. Instead, Jesus told the disciples, “You give them something to eat.” The disciples said that they could not give anything to the people because they did not have enough. In fact, the only food there was a lunch that belonged to a boy. Andrew said in John 6:9, “‘There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are they among so many?’” Here, we see that most of the disciples saw the problem of feeding five thousand men plus women and children instead of realizing that Jesus was the person who could solve any problem.

Jesus just told the disciples to have the people sit down in groups of fifty. The reason for this was so that they could feed people by groups and know that every group had received food. Any size group can be ministered to effectively as long as they are ministered to as smaller groups and not one huge group. The disciples were obedient and did what Jesus told them to do. Then, Jesus did the miracle as He took the five loaves and two fish, blessed them and then began to break them into pieces. Jesus gave the disciples baskets of food to take to each group of fifty people. Again, the disciples were obedient and did what Jesus told them to do.

Jesus performed a great miracle and all of the people ate and were filled. In addition to the five thousand men, there were also women and children to be fed, so the group could have been as much as fifteen or twenty thousand. Then, Jesus told the disciples to gather up the food that remained. We see the response of the disciples after they gathered up the food. John 6:13-14 says, “Therefore they gathered *them* up, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten. Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, ‘This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.’” This was one of the signs that Jesus showed His disciples so that they would recognize that He was the Messiah promised by the Old Testament. In the same way, we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to clearly explain that Jesus fulfilled all of the Old Testament promises. We also want to show our children the importance of obedience to Jesus even when He commands us to do those things that are difficult or impossible in our own strength. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to serve the Lord effectively.