

Proclaiming the Kingdom of God

Luke 9:1-9

Sunday, January 11, 2026

Welcome back to the Gospel of Luke! It's been about seven weeks since we finished Luke chapter 8 and then took a break for the Advent season. I hope it's true for you that absence makes the heart grow fonder, because I am excited to jump into the next chapter of Luke's Gospel with you. By the time we reach the end of chapter 9, we'll have come to a major turning point in this Gospel. There are some well-loved stories ahead, like the feeding of the 5,000, and the account of Jesus's transfiguration. We'll also come to passages where Jesus speaks more directly about his mission, and what it truly means to be his disciple.

By way of review, I want to refresh your memory about what took place in Luke chapter 8. Midway through that chapter, we read about Jesus's miraculous stilling of the storm as he and his disciples sailed across the Sea of Galilee. No sooner did Jesus and the Twelve safely reach the other side of the lake than they encountered a demon-possessed man as they arrived on shore. At that point, the disciples witnessed another demonstration of Jesus's power and authority when the Lord cast the demons out of the man, and sent them into a nearby herd of pigs, which subsequently ran off a cliff into the sea to their death.

When the disciples returned home, they witnessed not one but two more demonstrations of Jesus's power and authority. The Twelve saw Jesus heal a woman who had suffered for many years from a serious condition. That same day, Jesus took a few of his disciples to the home of a man named Jairus, whose young daughter had recently died. Taking the dead girl's hand, Jesus told her to get up as the Lord displayed his power over death by raising her to life.

Think about all that these twelve men—former fishermen, a tax collector, a Zealot, and others—had heard Jesus teach and seen the Lord do in the short time they had been following him. It's no wonder that they continued to ask themselves, as they did on the boat following the storm, "Who is this?" (8:25). I imagine that some may have even wondered what they had gotten themselves into by choosing to follow Jesus. They were about to find out.

Look with me at how chapter 9 begins.

"When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick" (9:1-2, NIV).

Who was it that taught you how to drive a car? Who showed you how to turn the key, put the car in drive, and gently press the accelerator? Who taught you left turns, right turns, and how to slow down to a stop? And do you remember what it was like when that person sat in the passenger seat, and for the first time, told you to sit behind the wheel? Think back to how you felt when you first sat in that driver's seat without any real experience under your belt.

My mom was the one who logged most of the hours with me when I was preparing for my driver's test. However, I do remember one occasion when my dad was with me in the car. I don't recall where we were going, but I remember pulling up to the intersection of North Star

Road and Northwest Boulevard, a fairly major crossing. The light was red, so I paused and looked both ways. Since no one was coming, I switched on my turn signal and slowly made my turn through the intersection. I had seen my parents make a right on red plenty of times. So, following their example, I did what they would do in that situation, except that I turned left. Apparently, making a left on red is a no-no. I didn't know. Fortunately, no one was coming, but that might have been one of the last times my dad was willing to take me driving.

Imagine what the twelve apostles must have thought when Jesus pulled them together and said, "Okay, boys. Now it's your turn. I want you to proclaim the good news, cast out demons, and cure disease. I am sending you out to announce the kingdom of God and to heal." Up to this point, the disciples had been passengers. Now Jesus was putting them in the driver's seat.

During their time with Jesus, the Twelve had come face to face with terrifying supernatural power. They had seen demon possession firsthand. They witnessed what evil spirits could do to a person under their power. What ability did the apostles have to go toe to toe with the devil?

As the Twelve traveled with Jesus, they met people who were sick, blind, diseased, paralyzed, bleeding, and even dead. First-century physicians could offer treatment, but the healing power of Jesus they had seen was on a whole other level. They saw Jesus do things that only God could do. What ability did they have to restore health or to give life to a human body?

From the very beginning of Jesus's ministry in Galilee, he had preached a message of good news. In Nazareth, Jesus read from the Old Testament prophet Isaiah, and said of himself,

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (4:18-19, NIV).

When it was time to move beyond his home base in Capernaum, Jesus told his followers,

"I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent" (4:43, NIV).

Similarly, Luke summarizes the ministry of Jesus at this time at the beginning of chapter 8.

"Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases" (8:1-2a, NIV).

Up to this point in Luke's Gospel, Jesus had been doing all the preaching. It was *his* mission to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God. But now in chapter 9, Jesus sent out the Twelve, as Luke says, "to proclaim the kingdom of God" (9:2). The apostles were being sent out into new places to be the hands, feet, and mouthpiece of Jesus. They were now being sent out to "proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick" (9:2, NIV).

That in itself must have felt like a monumental task. But look at what Jesus says next in verse 3.

“He told them: ‘Take nothing for the journey—no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra shirt’” (9:3, NIV).

I’ve had the privilege over the years to take part in various short-term mission trips. I’ve always tried to pack light, especially when traveling internationally, but never that light. I’ve always brought a change of clothes, some cash in my wallet, and even snacks for the journey. I’ve never gone without a suitcase in tow.

Jesus told his disciples to go and proclaim the kingdom of God and heal, but leave behind basic provisions. They could take the clothes on their back and the sandals on their feet, but nothing more. As they went from village to village, they were to depend on God’s provision through the hospitality of others. There was no safety net; no insurance. They were to travel by faith.

That’s not to say that the Twelve were sent out ill-equipped for the task. Though they traveled without extra provisions, notice in verse 1 how Jesus prepared them for their journey. Luke says that Jesus,

“gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases” (9:1, NIV).

Similarly, in verse 2, when Luke says that Jesus “sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick,” the implication is that Jesus gave them more than a commission; he also empowered them to speak and act in his name. They were by no means traveling without help.

And as ambassadors of the kingdom, the Twelve may have had no idea what to expect when they entered a village. Actually, Jesus did tell them what they could expect in verses 4 and 5.

“Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. If people do not welcome you, leave their town and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them” (9:4-5, NIV).

Upon arrival, the apostles were to look for a household that would receive them and show hospitality. Should they find such a home, they were to stay there for the duration of their visit. In those days, it was not uncommon for traveling teachers and philosophers to visit a town and go door to door seeking support. Some even had a reputation as teachers for profit. Jesus’s apostles were to be different. There was to be no hint of preaching the gospel for personal gain.

The Twelve were to trust that the Lord would provide for their needs wherever they went. But they also needed to know that in some places, the good news of the kingdom would not be received. In those cases, they were to leave town and leave the matter in the Lord’s hands.

This passage opens with Jesus’s commission, and it closes with the apostles’ compliance. Jesus sent, and the Twelve went.

“When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. ...So they set out and went from village to village, proclaiming the good news and healing people everywhere” (9:1-2, 6, NIV).

What then are we to take away from a passage like this? To what degree are Christians today to put themselves in the apostles’ shoes? Are we given power and authority over demons and disease? Has Jesus sent us all out to proclaim the kingdom of God, or just those we call “missionaries”? What does it mean to proclaim the kingdom of God?

Here is our big takeaway from this passage: **Jesus uses ordinary people to proclaim an extraordinary message.**

Before we account for the messengers, let’s first consider the message. **The gospel of the kingdom is an extraordinary message.** You may have noticed that Luke uses two different phrases in this passage to describe the apostles’ message. In verse 2, he speaks of “proclaim[ing] the kingdom of God.” But in verse 6, Luke describes the apostles’ activity as “preaching the gospel.” These are two ways of saying the same thing.

The verb that is used in verse 2, translated as “proclaim,” can also mean “to announce.” In this context, the word describes the act of publicly proclaiming a message. More than a transmission of information, this word was used to convey the idea of declaring an announcement as broadly as possible.

What Jesus sent the Twelve to proclaim or announce, as we see in verse 2, was “the kingdom of God.” When we hear the word *kingdom*, we tend to think in terms of location. Whether we picture a fictional kingdom, like that of a Disney princess, or a modern-day monarchy, like the throne of England, we imagine a kingdom with defined boundaries and royal subjects.

When we speak about the kingdom of God, rather than thinking in terms of a specific location, we should think in terms of God’s kingship or his sovereign reign.

Consider this definition from pastor and theologian, Jeremy Treat.

“God is king, and he reigns over his creation. But in a world marred by sin, God’s kingship is resisted, and the peace of his kingdom has been shattered. After Adam and Eve’s rebellion, God’s reign is revealed as redemptive. He’s the king who is reclaiming his creation. His kingdom is not the culmination of human potential and effort, but the intervention of his royal grace into a sinful and broken world.”¹

That is exactly what the gospel of the kingdom is all about. It is a declaration that God’s promise of salvation was now at work through the ministry of Jesus. It was an announcement that the rule and reign of God was now at work in the world with the coming of Jesus. The announcement of God’s saving rule was more than a declaration in word. It was also

¹ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/kingdom-god-8-words/>

demonstrated in power. Jesus's power and authority over Satan and the kingdom of darkness were on display whenever he cast out demons. Jesus's power and authority over disease and even death were on display as he healed the sick. These signs of the kingdom proved that God's saving rule and reign had now arrived.

Of course, we have a better understanding of the gospel of the kingdom than the Twelve did at this time. We live on this side of the cross. At the time the apostles were sent out to preach the gospel, they did not yet understand the extent of the saving work that Jesus had come to do. They could not yet foresee the cross or the resurrection. They could not yet comprehend how God would accomplish his saving promises through the death and resurrection of Jesus to save a people from their sins. But we now have the whole story, and that should convince us that the gospel of the kingdom is an extraordinary message.

But second, what truly amazes me from this passage is this: **Jesus uses ordinary people to proclaim an extraordinary message.**

We first met some of the Twelve back in chapter 5. These first disciples—Simon Peter, James, and John—were ordinary fishermen. To refer to these men as ordinary is not an insult. You understand, by ordinary, I'm referring to people like you and me. Certainly, we have varying degrees of life experience, skill, education, and the like. But in comparison to the Lord Jesus, one who possessed all power and authority within himself, you, me, and the apostles are simply ordinary.

Jesus prayerfully selected twelve individuals whose names appear in chapter 6 and in various places in the Gospels, most of whom we know nothing about from history. These were ordinary individuals. The same can be said of the women who accompanied and supported Jesus and the Twelve who are listed at the beginning of chapter 8. Again, to describe these men and women as ordinary is not to demean them, but to emphasize how like us they were.

Their ordinariness shines even brighter in verse 3, in that when Jesus sends them out in his name, he literally sends them out empty-handed. These apostles bring nothing to the table to contribute to the ministry of the kingdom. They have nothing to offer except their faith and their obedience.

Folks, how many times have we thought or said something like, "I can't be effective in preaching the gospel unless I have..."? Tools? Talents? What? Or, how many times have we as a church said something like, "We cannot be effective in ministry without this resource, this person, these facilities, or this program"?

My point is simply this: **Jesus uses ordinary people to proclaim an extraordinary message.**

I'm not suggesting that training is useless, that ministry skills aren't important, or that education is a waste of time. It's nice to have resources, finances, facilities, and programs. The Lord will use those things when we present them to him as an offering. But the Lord doesn't need those things. He possesses all power and authority, and he fully empowers and equips

those he sends out to proclaim his gospel. He uses empty-handed, ordinary people like you and me to announce an extraordinary gospel.

But finally, Luke leaves us with a stark reminder when it comes to proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom. **Though the message is extraordinary, responses to the gospel of the kingdom will vary.** We certainly see that in verses 3 and 4. As the apostles traveled from town to town with the gospel of the kingdom, some responded positively and welcomed the good news. Think back to Jesus's parable of the sower in the previous chapter. When the seed of the gospel is sown, some of it will fall on good soil where it not only takes root and germinates, but it also produces a bumper crop.

But the opposite is to be expected as well. Some of the places where the Twelve proclaimed the kingdom of God responded negatively and did not receive them. There the seed fell in places where it could not produce fruit.

At first glance, the verses that follow this section, verses 7-9 might seem unrelated. Almost as an aside, Luke brings up Herod the tetrarch, someone we've not thought much about since chapter 3. But notice what Luke tells his readers in these verses.

"Now Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was going on. And he was perplexed because some were saying that John had been raised from the dead, others that Elijah had appeared, and still others that one of the prophets of long ago had come back to life. But Herod said, "I beheaded John. Who, then, is this I hear such things about?" And he tried to see him" (9:7-9, NIV).

Luke tells us that "Herod...heard about all that was going on." Perhaps that is a reference to the miraculous activity of Jesus we read about in chapter 8. But I suspect that as Jesus sent out the Twelve, and if in effect, the ministry of Jesus was being multiplied through them in the region, that the buzz Herod was hearing was due to their activity.

John the Baptist was a messenger of the kingdom of God, and he lost his head because Herod resisted the call to repent and believe the good news. As Luke leads us into the next phase of Jesus's ministry, he seems to suggest that followers of Jesus should expect to meet opposition.

Though the message is extraordinary, responses to the gospel of the kingdom will vary.

But that should not discourage us. If anything, it should confirm for us that as the gospel of the kingdom of God goes forth, and as the saving rule and reign of God continues toward its full and final fulfillment, the kingdom of darkness will not hold on to its power and authority in this world. Until the day that King Jesus returns to ru

le and reign forever, may we remember that **Jesus uses ordinary people to proclaim an extraordinary message.**

Let's pray.