

We're going to be in Luke 9. I would also keep a tab on Matthew 10 as I'll be flipping over there too. If you don't have a bible, please take one as our gift to you. You can find them on the welcome desk right outside this door. In the meantime, the words will be on the screen behind me.

### **Luke 9:1-6 CSB**

**Summoning the Twelve, he gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases. 2 Then he sent them to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.**

**3 "Take nothing for the road," he told them, "no staff, no traveling bag, no bread, no money; and don't take an extra shirt. 4 Whatever house you enter, stay there and leave from there. 5 If they do not welcome you, when you leave that town, shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them." 6 So they went out and traveled from village to village, proclaiming the good news and healing everywhere."**

And that is the Word of the Lord from Luke 9.

### **TRANSITION:**

In this short journey for the disciples, we get a glimpse of the church we're meant to be. We're not meant to be atomized individuals striving to live our best lives with strong main character energy. We're also not meant to be surprised by or insulate ourselves from others.

Instead, we are meant to belong to a greater story and become a resilient people who expect both the joy and suffering of following Jesus.

### **1) The church is ordinary people part of an extraordinary story**

Last week, we saw Jesus respond to the desperate faith of Jairus as he begged Jesus to heal his dying daughter. From the text, we see Jesus continue to heal, preach and teach.

Being so up close with the brokenness of the human condition doesn't lead Jesus to bitterness or cynicism - it leads him to compassion. Look at Matthew 9

### **Matthew 9:35-38**

**35 Jesus continued going around to all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every sickness. 36 When he saw the crowds, he felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few. 38 Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest."**

The issue here wasn't the physical absence of leaders - the Pharisees were technically the ones tasked with shepherding. It was their spiritual absence. They were spending so much time and energy trying to eliminate Jesus that they neglected their call to lead the sheep surrounding them.

#### **Luke 9:1**

**Summoning the Twelve, he gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases.**

So Jesus calls the Twelve, who are also called apostles, and sends them out to the harvest of people who need healing and the good news of the kingdom of God. Jesus chose these men back in Luke 6 after praying all night to God about who should be selected to help carry out this mission.

These men were not selected because of their theological acumen or public speaking skills. In fact, the text isn't quite clear as to why he selected these 12 men at all. What we do know is who these men will become: pillars of what we now call the church.

That word "apostle" simply means messenger. However, what distinguishes the apostles from the other disciples is the power and authority they're given to heal disease and cast out demons.. The power they're given isn't an enhancement of their own skillset.

The word "power" here is the greek word "exousia", which is deeper than ability and broader than power - this authority suggests a right to command, a right given to the apostles by God.

With this power, Jesus is sending them to specific *people* with a simple *message*. Let's start with the people by looking at Matthew's account of these events:

#### **Matthew 10:5-6**

**"Jesus sent out these twelve after giving them instructions: Don't take the road that leads to the Gentiles, and don't enter any Samaritan town. 6 Instead, go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.**

Jesus isn't sending them on random door-to-door visits; he is initially only sending them to the people of Israel. And this is not meant to be a moment of him just excluding the gentiles (they'll have their moment in Luke 10). He is actually showing great care to call the people who have been called by God from the start.

#### **Luke 9:1**

And this is where we begin to understand the significance of sending 12 disciples - the 12 represent the 12 tribes of Israel. Through these 12 men, Jesus is signaling a new start for Israel - a new chapter in the grand story of redemption.

To help us better understand this grand story, I want to take us further back in Israel's history, back to a time where it seems like the last thing they wanted was his authority.

A consistent pattern we see throughout the Old Testament is God committing himself to his people, promising to protect them, be with them - and while it's initially met with gratitude, the people choose their sin over him.

They worshiped idols, they complained about their hardship, they lost sight of how far he had brought them - and we see their discontent reach a fever pitch as they demand a human king.

So Israel goes to the prophet Samuel and says, "We want a king!". Despite a warning from God that kings will take more than they'll give, the people still demand a king and God gives them what they want.

So Samuel goes out, anoints King Saul, and while Saul leads Israel into some years of prosperity, he ultimately chooses his own way when things get difficult and God rejects him.

King David takes Saul's place and brings Israel into material and spiritual flourishing in his rule. He is zealous for the Lord, and in his zeal, he says, "I'm going to build God a beautiful temple!". But God says, who are you, Chip Gaines? No, essentially, he says "you can't contain my glory" and actually gives something far more precious to David.

## **2 Samuel 7:11b-14a, 16**

**" 'The Lord declares to you: The Lord himself will make a house for you. 12 When your time comes and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up after you your descendant, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He is the one who will build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 I will be his father and he will be my son... 16 Your house and kingdom will endure before me forever, and your throne will be established forever.' "**

David is completely overwhelmed and even pens a beautiful song in response to this promise. Could David really be the savior Israel was seeking? Sadly, no. He fails through committing adultery and murder, sending he and his descendants into years of destruction.

The kings that follow David let Israel down miserably, reinforcing their rebellion against God. They are disillusioned and confused, utterly let down by their idyllic vision of being ruled by a king. Over centuries to come, God's people are taken captive by one foreign power after another, the latest being first century Rome.

Israel is exhausted, desperate for deliverance from Rome's iron fisted rule. Yet God didn't leave them without hope. The prophet Isaiah says,

**Isaiah 35:1, 5-6**

**The wilderness and the dry land will be glad;  
the desert will rejoice and blossom like a wildflower...**

**Then the eyes of the blind will be opened,  
and the ears of the deaf unstopped.  
Then the lame will leap like a deer,  
and the tongue of the mute will sing for joy,  
for water will gush in the wilderness...**

Amid a bleak landscape of displacement and corrupt rulers, Isaiah is telling God's people that there will be healing. The centuries of desolation brought about by Israel's sinful rebellion will end and how will they know? The blind will see, the deaf will hear, the lame will walk - and what do we find in Matthew 9, just before we read about the 12 disciples?

We see Jesus opening the eyes of the blind, we see Jesus making the lame walk - HE is the water in the wilderness for a parched people. He is the true and better David, ready to lead his people into righteousness and salvation because HE IS the salvation they've been seeking.

Remember, Jesus has sent the disciples to a specific people with a simple message. And what's that message?

**Luke 9:2**

**2 Then he sent them to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.**

"The kingdom of God" (or "the kingdom of God is near") - and the healing they're sent out to do is meant to signify how imminent God's reign is. And by "kingdom" we are referring to the reign of God as King, not a physical city. A couple weeks ago, Trevor referred to the "kingdom" of God as the culture of God in his sermon because when Jesus is announcing his reign, he is announcing a new culture, a new way for people to live as brothers and sisters united by faith.

Now remember the reality Israel is living in - the absolute tyranny of Roman rule. Because many of us are so familiar with the term "kingdom of God", it can become noise but announcing or heralding a new kingdom was a familiar concept to the disciples.

Whenever a new king or regime took over, it was painfully obvious. Armed soldiers would surround the area, a herald would announce it, it was serious. A show of strength and intimidation from Rome, for example, would signal to everyone else, "If you resist, you will suffer the consequences."

So when the twelve are chosen, I imagine they're like "GAME ON! This is our guy, we've seen him do some miraculous stuff, he's about to SHUT ROME DOWN!" When they hear "kingdom come", they likely hear "conquest".

But there is NO air of conquest in Jesus' kingdom vision. And the message is not one of intimidation but invitation. Well if this is a kingdom announcement, how will the people know it's coming? What's Jesus' show of strength here?

2 things: one, the scriptures that testify to Jesus (that passage we read in Isaiah, there's way more where that came from) and the healings the disciples will perform. At this point, Jesus is saying, people have what they need to recognize me - now the ball is in their court to either believe me or not.

So before they're even sent out, the disciples have no opportunity to see themselves as the main character here.

### **Luke 9:3**

**3 "Take nothing for the road," he told them, "no staff, no traveling bag, no bread, no money; and don't take an extra shirt."**

Look back at verse 3 - the point is not for the disciples to look like they're somebody, to look "official" as they proclaim God's kingdom. The point is to let the message and the miracles speak for themselves. Sure, it may be a shot to the ego, but the story was never about them.

### **Back to point 1**

This kind of humility, seeing yourself inside a bigger story stands in stark contrast to our world full of folks trying to live out their own stories. A few years back, the term "main character energy" became popularized by a Tiktok trend of self-possessed people walking through their daily lives like the main character in a movie or book. (Video of guy walking with his over-the-ear headphones with a smolder).

Ironically and unsurprisingly, having "main character energy" has become a serious means for people to motivate themselves (TED talk - Embrace your main character energy). But what do we often see in main characters in books or movies? We not only see their confidence, we see their pain, their flaws.

So when we begin to turn so far inward that we neglect the greater story we're a part of, the people that we love, "main character energy" becomes a burden. We hyperfixate on everything we need to get better at, replay all the mistakes we've ever made, and STILL try to prove our worth to others in the process.

We also begin to put what we want at the forefront, as the most important - anyone or anything that stands in our way of pleasure or fame or validation must be eliminated. Efficiency becomes the main goal as relationships and Things that require self sacrifice merely become inconveniences In our way

And look at where that's gotten us - we're more lonely, more anxious, and more depressed than ever!

When Israel tried to put themselves at the center of the story, chaos ensued. And they had to reckon with the consequences of their sins which led to death, captivity. But God didn't give up on them. And throughout the Bible, we begin to see the main character come forth: Jesus Christ, the promised deliverer who saves us from a wearying life of sin and selfishness.

City Church, what would we be like if we took this (lift bible) seriously and let Jesus be the main character in our lives? You know why we open this book every Sunday and call you to read it daily? Because you have been called to be a part of this story, a part of bringing the hope of the kingdom of God into your home, into your office, into your family.

So here's my challenge to you: if you've never read the bible regularly or you're trying to get back on the horse, read or listen to God's Word (when I say listen to God's word, I mean listen to the bible, not a podcast about the bible) for 5 minutes after lunch today. Just start there - and then do it again tomorrow and the next day. Immerse yourself in the story you've been called into.

Remember: just like the disciples, you're not part of the story because you're impressive. You're a part of the story because you are loved by God and have been called by him which is what makes us resilient, expecting the joy of repentance and the sting of rejection.

## **2) The church is resilient - expecting repentance and rejection**

When Jesus is instructing the disciples to heal and proclaim the kingdom, he says you will either be welcomed or you won't - expect both. If you're welcomed, stay in the house you're welcomed into. If not, shake the dust off, just head on out.

### **Luke 9:3-4**

**"Take nothing for the road," he told them, "no staff, no traveling bag, no bread, no money; and don't take an extra shirt. 4 Whatever house you enter, stay there and leave from there 4 Whatever house you enter, stay there and leave from there."**

Now remember: the disciples aren't beggars or swindlers here. They are heralds, announcing the king, the hope of their salvation has come. Furthermore, the healing isn't meant to just peak curiosity but actually cause people to understand and believe the nearing kingdom. We've already seen this receptivity in the people Jesus has healed already.

Jairus doesn't look at his resurrected daughter and back at Jesus saying, "Huh - what's your source? I'm interested, just not convinced." No, he is changed! And the hope is that Israel will also be changed through these healings.

Verse 4 speaks more specifically to the customs of that culture. The disciples are told to stay in whatever house they enter because leaving one house for another would communicate they were going to the house that provided more support and therefore suggest they were only out for money.

You see, Jesus is telling them you're not going to need all these extra supplies because I'm going to make sure you're taken care of. You're going to experience *my* provision through the hospitality of *my* people. And this will be far from the last time the disciples will be called to rely on God in the face of seemingly scarce situations.

Throughout this whole passage, we're getting glimpses of who the church is called to be. The gospel is being proclaimed, people are welcomed in and shown hospitality - it reminds of me of the early church in Acts

#### **Acts 2:43, 46-47a**

**"Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and signs were being performed through the apostles...Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple, and broke bread from house to house. They ate their food with joyful and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people..."**

The disciples don't know it yet but this first mission to the Jews is likely giving them a paradigm for gospel ministry. I especially love this first phrase "everyone was filled with awe" - the awe is what leads the people of Israel to open their doors and their hearts to Jesus' kingdom message in Luke 9.

But the disciples are also prepared for the doors to be closed on them.

#### **Luke 9:5**

**If they do not welcome you, when you leave that town, shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them."**

Shaking dust from the feet represents disapproval and describes a custom of Jewish travelers. After leaving gentile lands, they would shake the dust from those lands out of their garments, as if to rid themselves of their pollution.

So to shake out the dust of a *Jewish* town is to treat its residents as pagans. The gesture of shaking the dust off symbolizes judgment on the town that rejects the message.

Remember - the apostles are heralds of God's kingdom so they've been given authority to both proclaim the kingdom's arrival and give this sign of judgment. So rejecting the apostles is tantamount to rejecting Jesus himself. This is not a sign of pettiness; this is the king's directive.

#### **Back to point 2**

Rejection is sadly a common refrain we find in the gospels, a lot of it coming from God's own people. Instead of choosing to turn from their sin, there are many whose hearts remain hardened to Jesus' message of hope and healing. And that is the same rejection we're to expect today - not from a place of cynicism but of sobriety and sadness.

Some of you in this room are watching people you love run from Jesus, rejecting his call to repentance, to be a part of his kingdom. These are your friends, your siblings, your kids. First of all, I want you to know that I grieve with you.

Second, I want us to remember the cross together. On the cross, Jesus became sin for us, dying for those who rejected him. That was the death that we deserved to die but he gave us his righteousness through taking all of our sin on himself.

And finally, God's word says in 2 Peter 3 that He is patient with us, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance. And just as we're to expect rejection, we also need to be a people who are expectant and longing for people to turn from their sin and towards Christ.

#### **Luke 9:6**

**So they went out and traveled from village to village, proclaiming the good news and healing everywhere."**

The potential of rejection didn't keep the disciples from going out to proclaim Jesus' arrival. As they're sent out, the apostles are helping form a new Israel, a family of faith united by belief in Christ as King. And out of that small, fledgling family came the global church, a movement of God that you and I are now a part of.

As the church, we also need to be prayerfully expectant for people's repentance. Earlier this month, we had a prayer and worship night in which we posted big pieces of paper all around the room and wrote the names of folks we're praying for who don't know Christ.

Those papers are now hanging in the hallway of our staff office house as a reminder to us that God isn't finished. City Church, don't give up in praying for others' repentance. Yes, be sobered by the reality and weight of sin, but resist the toxic cynicism of our day that says people can't change by praying fervently and opening your mouth to proclaim the miracle of the gospel.

I want to end with this today - as I read passages today about miraculous healing and signs and wonders, you might be thinking, "Man, I just wish church and life with Jesus could be like that. Why can't it be?! The breaking of bread, the healing - why can't that be us? That sure would feel different than the same ol' same ol' I'm experiencing now."

While there is definitely beauty in these passages, I'm here to tell you that if you're in Christ, you have access to far greater power in the Holy Spirit, the same power that raised Jesus from the dead! Before he ascended to heaven, Jesus told his disciples



**Acts 1:8**

**But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."**

The Holy Spirit specializes in bringing God's extraordinary power and presence into the mundane. While we may not be seeing supernatural physical healing, we are seeing the Holy Spirit empower and change people from the inside out here at City Church.

We are seeing this healing happening in our G4 counseling groups on Monday nights. Each week, men and women are taking the brave step through these doors to deal with the sin or suffering in their lives and finding true, lasting freedom through the hope of the gospel and the power of God's Spirit.

Next week, we're going to baptize a man who sought God out through simply opening his bible every day and allowed himself to be TRANSFORMED by the Holy Spirit which made him overflow and share his love for scripture with his family.

So I encourage you not to sell God's Spirit short and allow him to bring renewal in your everyday life. When we as a church experience that renewal on a corporate level, revival happens.

City Church, the kingdom of God is both now and not yet. The life, death and resurrection of Jesus has brought the kingdom to earth and it is being furthered into the world through us the church. But it's also just a taste of what's to come - b/c right now, through our lives being changed by the Holy Spirit, we are getting vivid glimpses of the kingdom to come, when Christ returns to make all things new.

On that day, the story will all come together. All sad things will be made untrue. Jesus will wipe every tear from our eye and we will be with him forevermore.