

The Gospel of the Kingdom (Luke 9:1–9)

An Apostolic Internship

It had been about a year, maybe closer to two (it is difficult to keep track of chronology in the Gospels), since the disciples first encountered Jesus of Nazareth. Some met Him at the Jordan River, where they had been attending the ministry of John the Baptist (Jn 1:35–42). Others met Him upon His return to Galilee (Jn 1:43–51). Everywhere Jesus went, people followed Him, listening to His words and marveling at His mighty works. But at some point in the midst of His Galilean ministry, Jesus chose from among the crowd of followers twelve whom He named apostles (Lk 6:12–16), and these became the special focus of his discipleship. They travelled with Him everywhere (Lk 8:1), observing His ministry and receiving His instruction.

And now the time had come for them to put into practice what they had been learning. Philip Ryken calls this passage their apostolic “internship.”¹ Before the Lord sent them to the ends of the earth to lay the foundation for the new covenant church, He sent them throughout the cities and villages of Israel to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom. This is the very first mission trip. And though these twelve were apostles who held a unique, foundational office in redemptive history, and though they were endued with unique gifts that confirmed their unique authority, and though they ministered at a unique moment in redemptive history, yet there are transferrable principles we may learn about the ministry of the gospel and the mission of the kingdom that takes place throughout the entirety of this present age.²

There are, then, two levels of relevance and application of this text for us today. On the one hand, this text speaks a word to the world. If you stand outside the kingdom of God (I will explain what that means later), then you are like the citizens of the cities of Israel who were the intended recipients of this gospel ministry. You should pay close attention to the gospel of the kingdom that I will preach today, because it will inform you what the kingdom of God is, how you may enter the kingdom, what happens if you receive the kingdom, and what happens if you

¹ Philip Ryken, *Luke, Volume 1: Luke 1–12*, REC (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2009), 420.

² “The passage is one which throws much light on the work of Christian ministers in every age. No doubt the miraculous powers which the apostles possessed, made their position very unlike that of any other body of men in the church. No doubt, in many respects, they stood alone, and had no successors. Yet the words of our Lord in this place must not be confined entirely to the apostles. They contain deep wisdom for Christian teachers and preachers, for all time”; J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on Luke, Volume 1* (1858; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2012), 222.

refuse the kingdom. This message is every bit as relevant to you today as it was to the people of the cities and villages of Israel two thousand years ago. The King has come, and He is gathering His subjects into His kingdom. Will you be among them?

On the other hand, the text speaks a word to the church, to whom the gospel of the kingdom has been entrusted. These nine verses contain an ever-so-brief description of kingdom ministry that is packed with principles for conducting that ministry in accordance with Jesus' instruction. So if we want to be found faithful at the return of the King, we need to align our kingdom mission with these instructions.

So my thesis statement this morning is two-fold, directed to each audience in attendance today. *First, if you want to be a faithful member of the kingdom, you must receive the gospel of the kingdom. Second, if you want to be a faithful minister of the kingdom, you must follow the instructions of the King.* And I find in this text six instructions for kingdom mission.

I. Proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom (vv. 1–2)

First, to be found faithful in the mission of the kingdom we must be faithful to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom. Look at vv. 1–2:

And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.
(9:1–2)

Now, some of you may have noticed that I seem to be skipping over the part where Jesus grants the apostles “power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases” (v. 1), and how he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God *and to heal*” (v. 2). In continuity with the vast majority of church history, and the whole of the Reformation tradition, I understand this portion of Jesus' commission to be unique to the apostles during this extraordinary time in redemptive history. In other words, exorcism and healing is not part of the ordinary mission of the kingdom. This is not to suggest that exorcism and healing *never* occurs in the course of kingdom mission and ministry (I am not a cessationist), but rather that it does not occupy a central role in the mission of the kingdom. My purpose this morning is not to dive into the cessationist/continuationist debate, nor to expound at length upon the purpose or prevalence of signs and wonders. But I also do not

want anyone thinking that we skip difficult verses or that we are afraid of signs and wonders—we don’t, and we aren’t. So I will simply give you three quick reasons Luke 9:1—with its reference to exorcisms and healings, signs and wonders—is not part of the ordinary mission of the kingdom.

First, in the New Testament, signs and wonders are most closely connected with the apostles, as God’s way of attesting their authenticity and authority as His appointed messengers. When Paul was defending his apostleship to the Corinthian church, he wrote,

The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works. (2 Cor 12:12)

If everyone was performing “signs and wonders and mighty works,” such miracles would not function as signs of a true apostle (cf. Acts 5:12, 15–16). When the author of Hebrews wrote to the Jewish Christian congregation (probably in Rome, but perhaps in Judea) warning them not to drift away from the gospel of Christ, he said,

... how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by the gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will. (Heb 2:3–4)

Here we find a chain of revelation: the gospel was declared first by the Lord Jesus Christ, then it was passed on to “those who heard” (i.e. His apostles), to whom God bore witness “by signs and wonders and various miracles” as they declared the gospel to everyone else. Again, this does not prove that signs and wonders and miracles ceased with the apostles and cannot happen today. It simply suggests that in Luke 9:1, when Jesus was sending out His apostles, the reference to exorcism and healing should not be taken as a paradigm for all kingdom ministry throughout this age, but only for the foundational ministry of the apostles.³ As the foundational office of apostle

³ “The word translated ‘apostle’ means someone who is sent. Sometimes it has the general sense of ‘messenger’ (2 Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25). However, it is most often used in the New Testament for a special group of men directly appointed by Jesus Christ (Luke 6:13). They were eyewitnesses of the risen Lord (Acts 1:22; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:7–8). The apostles were extraordinary ministers of the new covenant. God revealed truth directly to them

has ceased (Acts 1:21–22), so too have the “signs of a true apostle.”⁴ When exorcisms or healings do happen today, they are extraordinary gifts given to the church, not ordinary signs of apostleship. Once the extraordinary, foundational ministry of the apostles ceased, the ordinary ministry of the gospel continues on to the end of the age. This is evident in the New Testament as the extraordinary ministry of signs and wonders gave way to the ordinary ministry of word and sacrament. Miracles are prevalent in the early period of the New Testament age; they are all but absent from the later stages of the New Testament age. You will look in vain for references to contemporary signs and wonders in the later books of the New Testament (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1–2 Timothy, Titus, Hebrews, 1–2 Peter, 1–3 John). But these later books are filled with references to the ongoing ministry of the gospel.

Second, if we step back and look at the whole panorama of redemptive history, we will find that signs and wonders do not occur with the same intensity or regularity throughout, but rather are clustered around three important periods of redemptive history—the time of the exodus and the ministry of Moses and Aaron, the days of Elijah and Elisha, and the age of Christ and His apostles. Joel Beeke writes, “These concentrations of miracles . . . happened at significant moments in history—when the Lord redeemed Israel from its bondage to Egypt and made it his holy nation, when the prophets confronted Israel over its covenant breaking, and when God the Son came in the flesh” to accomplish redemption.⁵ Besides these three periods, signs and wonders were sporadic at best (though not non-existent). It is interesting that reliable sources from church history have noted the relative absence of signs and wonders in their own days. In the fourth century, John Chrysostom in a homily on 1 Corinthians 12, wrote that the miraculous gifts were “such as then used to occur but now no longer take place.”⁶ Jonathan Edwards, writing in the eighteenth century, said,

(Gal. 1:1, 11–12). They spoke as God spoke in them (Matt. 10:20; 2 Cor. 13:3), and what they wrote was the word of the Lord (1 Cor. 14:37). The Lord Jesus appointed apostles to heal, cast out demons, and preach the gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 10:1–8). God confirmed their office with ‘the signs of an apostle . . . signs and wonders, and mighty deeds’ (2 Cor. 12:12). The apostles also governed the church as its shepherds with the elders (John 21:15–17; Acts 15; 1 Pet. 5:1)”; Joel R. Beeke and Paul M. Smalley, *Essentials of Reformed Systematic Theology* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2025), 482.

⁴ “By the beginning of the second century AD, the last of the apostles had died. The New Testament contains no record that they appointed men to succeed them as apostles. Instead, the apostles established a church order consisting of elders and deacons (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1–13); Beeke and Smalley, *Essentials of Reformed Systematic Theology*, 482.

⁵ Beeke and Smalley, *Essentials of Reformed Systematic Theology*, 487.

⁶ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on 1 Corinthians*, 29.1, in *NPNF*¹, 12:168; quoted in Beeke and Smalley, *Essentials of Reformed Theology*, 487.

The thing chiefly designed by the extraordinary gifts was to introduce and establish that standing revelation of the mind and will of God by his word, as the grand means of grace and standing rule of faith and practice through the ages. . . . then those extraordinary influences of the Spirit of God withdrew and vanished away. . . . They are no more to be expected in the Christian church.⁷

I don't know if I would go as far as Chrysostom and Edwards as to say that such signs and wonders do not and cannot occur since the apostolic age, but I certainly will affirm that they are extraordinary and exceedingly rare. But the ordinary ministry of the word continues unabated.

Third, signs and wonders are not part of the ordinary ministry of the kingdom because faith comes by hearing, not by healing. In other words, exorcism and healing are not sufficient in themselves to produce everlasting salvation. The healing of the ten lepers (Lk 17:11–19) and Jesus' warning about the return of the unclean spirit (Mt 12:42–45) should be sufficient to prove that. Unless I am reading the Gospels wrong, the vast majority of those who were healed or from whom demons were cast out were not genuinely converted (cf. the examples of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum in Mt 11:20–24). The kingdom of God spreads through the ordinary preaching of the gospel of the kingdom; signs and wonders are extraordinary foretastes of the “powers of the age to come” (Heb 6:5) breaking in upon the present age.

With that explanation, let's focus our attention, then, upon the core of the mission of the kingdom, which is the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom. As a church, if we want to be found faithful in the mission of the kingdom, we must be faithful to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom— “... and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God.” What does it mean “to proclaim the kingdom of God” (κηρύσσειν τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ)? I think this is Luke's shorthand for what Mark stated in longer form in Mark 1:14–15:

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe the gospel.” (Mk 1:14–15)

⁷ Jonathan Edwards, “Extraordinary Gifts of the Spirit Are Inferior to Grace of the Spirit,” in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 26 volumes (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957–2008), 25:285, 287; quoted in Beeke and Smalley, *Essentials of Reformed Systematic Theology*, 487.

From this brief summary of the gospel message, we can see three important elements.

First, the gospel of the kingdom is the message of a King—it is the gospel of the kingdom *of God*. The King is the one, true and living God. He is eternal, invisible, and immeasurable, infinite in being, wisdom, power, and glory, trinitarian in nature—three divine persons united in one divine essence, coequal and coeternal. This King created all things by the word of His power, and rules over all that He has made. It is the King who says,

*I am the LORD, and there is no other,
besides me there is no God. (Is 45:5a)*

It is to the King that Hezekiah prays,

*“O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, enthroned above the cherubim, you are God, you alone,
of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth.” (Is 37:16)*

The LORD rules in unrivaled sovereignty over all creation. But while God’s universal sovereignty is the starting point for the gospel, the “gospel of the kingdom” does not refer to the message of God’s universal reign, but to something more specific. We know this because God’s universal sovereignty over all creation has never been abdicated. God has always worked all things according to the counsel of His will (Eph 1:11). And yet, the message of the gospel is that, “The time is fulfilled; the kingdom of God is at hand” (Mk 1:15). In other words, the gospel announces that something that was once not “at hand” is now “at hand”; something that was once far away has now “come near.”

Second, the gospel of the kingdom is the message of a kingdom—it is the message of the *kingdom* of God. When Jesus sent the apostles out to preach about the kingdom of God, He was not referring to God’s universal sovereignty over all creation—what we might call God’s *creation kingdom*. He was referring to what we might call God’s *covenant kingdom*—that place where God rules over His covenant people.⁸ In his book *Gospel and Kingdom*, Graeme

⁸ “We need to distinguish here between the absolute sovereignty of God and the Kingdom of God. Neither man nor devil can escape the sovereign power of God, no matter how hard either may fight against it. In the end all who rebel against their Creator will be forced to submit to the undeniable reality of God’s lordship. But the Kingdom of God as the Bible reveals it is the sphere of God’s rule in which his creatures submit willingly to this

Goldsworthy defines the kingdom of God (God's covenant kingdom) as containing three essential components: "there is a king who *rules*, a people who are *ruled*, and a sphere where this rule is *recognized* as taking place. Put another way, the Kingdom of God involves: (a) God's people; (b) in God's place; (c) under God's rule."⁹ Understood in this way, we can see the structure of redemptive history begin to take shape around the theme of the kingdom of God:

- The kingdom of God was *established* in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were God's covenant people, living in God's covenant place, under God's covenant rule. Goldsworthy writes, "The point where this pattern [God's people, God's place, God's rule] is established is the Garden of Eden. Here we see the people of God (Adam and Eve in their innocence), the garden paradise (the place which God prepared as the perfect environment for his people) and the rule of God expressed by his word. God, as the sovereign king, sets the limits of freedom: 'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat' (Genesis 2:16–17)."¹⁰
- The kingdom of God was *forfeited* in the fall of man. When Adam rebelled against God, rejecting God's rule, he plunged himself and all his descendants into ruin and destruction, into condemnation and corruption. God cast Adam and Eve and all their descendents out of His kingdom (Gn 3:22–24), and then withdrew His kingdom from the earth, leaving all mankind to suffer the consequences of that rebellion.
- The kingdom of God was *promised* in the immediate aftermath of Adam's fall, when God promised that He would send a King, born of woman, who would crush the serpent's head (Gn 3:15). God then revealed that this King would also be a Redeemer, for this coming King would suffer in the act of crushing the serpent's head ("he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel"). The LORD then gave Adam and Eve a visible sign of His promise—He slew a lamb and clothed their shameful nakedness in its skins (Gn 3:21). Thus, God showed from the beginning that the way back into His kingdom would be through faith in the promised King and the death of a sacrifice. In time, God called Abraham and made him three promises:

righteous rule. God's sovereign rule is universal; the Kingdom of God is not"; Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Kingdom* (1981; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2012), 61–62.

⁹ Goldsworthy, 53–54.

¹⁰ Goldsworthy, 60.

- Abraham's descendants would become a great nation (Gn 12:2; 13:16; 15:5; 16:10; 18:18).
- Abraham's descendants would possess the promised land (Gn 12:7; 13:14–15; 15:18–21; 17:8).
- Abraham's descendants would be God's own people (Gn 17:2, 7–8; 18:19).

Does that sound familiar? God promised Abraham that his descendants would be God's people, living in God's place, under God's rule. In other words, the LORD revealed to Abraham the coming kingdom of God. These promises then came to a temporary, short-term fulfillment in the exodus of Israel from Egypt and their establishment in the land of Canaan. Israel was God's people, living in God's place, under God's rule.

- The kingdom of God was *prefigured* in Israel under the reign of David and Solomon. David, the “man after God's own heart” (1 Sm 13:14), defeated Israel's enemies and established Israel's kingdom. His son, Solomon, constructed the temple and reigned in wisdom and splendor. Yet, as we know, both David and Solomon were but pale reflections of the promised King, now revealed to be both David's Son and David's Lord (Ps 110:1), who would reign forever upon the throne of God's kingdom (2 Sm 7:12–13).
- The kingdom was *predicted* through the Old Testament prophets. As the kingdom of Israel disintegrated and declined into sin, idolatry, and faithlessness, the prophets of God began to look forward a new and everlasting covenant, a new and everlasting kingdom, a new and everlasting King, and a new and everlasting creation. And they began to give shape to the hope of a final defeat of Satan (e.g. Isaiah 14) and a final deliverance from sin by the death of a sacrifice (e.g. Isaiah 53).
- The kingdom was *inaugurated* at Christ's first advent—His life, death, resurrection, and ascension. This is what Jesus meant when He declared that the kingdom of God was “at hand” (ἤγγικεν). What was established in Eden, forfeited at the Fall, promised to the patriarchs, prefigured in David and Solomon, and predicted by the prophets, has finally arrived in Christ. Think of the three essential components of the Kingdom of God, and consider how they are fulfilled in Jesus:

- God's *people*—Jesus is revealed in the Gospels to be the true and better Adam, the true seed of Abraham, the true Son of Israel, and the true Son of David. In other words, Jesus is the fulfillment of every promise of God's kingdom people. Goldsworthy notes, "These various identities of Jesus establish one clear point. Jesus Christ is the head of the new race. All who are united to him are members of that race, but only because he *is* that race. Thus whoever is 'in Christ' is a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17), that is, he belongs to the new order of which Christ is head."¹¹ Through the mission of the kingdom, people from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation are being gathered into the kingdom of God.
- God's *place*—The kingdom of God is that place where God dwells in the midst of His covenant people. Initially, that was the Garden of Eden; then it was the wilderness tabernacle; then it was the Jerusalem temple. But Jesus is revealed to be the true temple of God (Jn 1:14; 2:19–21); therefore, so is His body, the church, the true temple of God (Eph 2:19–22; 1 Pt 2:4–6). Likewise, the kingdom of God is where the King reigns over His covenant people. And where does Jesus reign over His covenant people? He reigns upon the throne in heaven (Eph 1:20–22), and over His church on earth (Eph 1:23). Thus, the kingdom of God is present now in heaven, and on earth wherever His church is gathered (Mt 18:20).
- God's *rule*—The kingdom of God is that place where God rules over His people by His word (His covenant). Again, we see this in the Garden of Eden in the Adamic covenant, and in Israel through the Abrahamic covenant, and later, the Mosaic covenant. But as Israel degenerated into sin and faithlessness, there emerged the prophetic hope of a new and everlasting covenant in which God's law would be written upon the hearts of God's people, such that they would obey Him from the heart (Jer 31:31–34; Ezk 36:26–27). This new covenant was mediated and inaugurated by the death of Christ (Lk 22:20; Heb 9:15; 13:20).

¹¹ Goldsworthy, 112.

Thus, God's people (the church—the new Israel), God's place (the new temple), and God's rule (the new covenant) come together in Christ. Christ, the eternal Son of God and the incarnate Son of Man, is the King, and His kingdom is now present in heaven and in His church on earth.

- The kingdom was *consummated* at Christ's second coming. At His return, the kingdom of God that is presently “not of this world” (Jn 18:36), but is now spiritual and heavenly, will become “of this world” as Christ returns to raise the dead, judge the earth, and establish His everlasting kingdom in a new heavens and new earth.

Then God's people will dwell forever in God's place under God's rule.

Third, it is a message that calls for repentance and faith—Christ calls us to “repent and believe the gospel.” This is how sinners (those outside the kingdom of God) enter into the kingdom of God. Repentance is renouncing our self-rule (“you will be like God, knowing good and evil” [Gn 3:5]), and submitting to the rule of Christ. Repentance is renouncing our rebellion against God and swearing allegiance to Christ the King. It was rebellion that got man expelled from the kingdom of God to begin with; it is repentance that grants man entrance into the kingdom once again. If repentance is renouncing our rebellion, submitting to the rule of Christ, and swearing allegiance to Christ as King, faith is receiving and resting in the saving work of Christ as Redeemer. This saving work addresses our two-fold problem that excludes us from the kingdom of God.

- First, our sin has placed us under *condemnation*. We have rebelled against the King, and that rebellion will not go unpunished. In His righteousness, God has condemned sinners to the penalty of everlasting ruin and destruction. Nevertheless, in His mercy, God has come in the person of the eternal Son, to become the incarnate Son of Man, to live, die, and rise again in the place of sinners. In His life, Jesus Christ fulfilled the righteousness of the law as our representative. In His death, Jesus Christ satisfied the penalty of the law as our substitute. And this redeeming work was infinitely sufficient such that Christ rose from the dead to everlasting life and glory. To escape the condemnation that is upon us for our sins, we must be justified by faith in Christ alone. To believe the gospel is to receive and rest upon Christ alone, to plead only the blood and righteousness of Christ before the bar of God's judgment.

- Second, our sin is the result of our *corruption*. We sin because we are sinners; we bear corrupt fruit because we are corrupt trees. We have inherited from Adam not only the condemnation of sin, but also the corruption of sin. If justification is the answer to my condemnation, then sanctification is the answer to my corruption. And this, too, comes through faith in Christ alone. Sanctification begins with regeneration, and ends in glorification, and all of this comes to me in and through Christ. Regeneration is the sovereign work of God that brings me from spiritual death to spiritual life and enables me to repent and believe; therefore, I am entirely passive in the work of regeneration. But sanctification is the ongoing work of renewal by the power of the Holy Spirit, and in this work of grace I am very much active. Nevertheless, at the bottom of my activity is faith—a day-by-day, moment-by-moment reliance upon Christ to heal my corruption, to renew my mind, and to restore in me the image of God by the power of His Spirit.

Thus, “repent and believe the gospel” means not only to trust Christ to save me from sin’s penalty through His life, death, and resurrection, but also to trust Christ to save me from the sin’s power by His Spirit, and ultimately, from sin’s presence altogether when He raises me to everlasting glory and brings me glorified in body and soul into His everlasting kingdom.

This is the gospel of the kingdom. If you would enter into the kingdom of God, you must repent and believe this gospel. If First Baptist Nixa would be faithful in the mission of the kingdom, we must proclaim this gospel of the kingdom, for this is the very core of our mission in this present age.

II. Trust in the Provision of the Kingdom (v. 3)

Second, to be found faithful in the mission of the kingdom, we must trust in the provision of the kingdom. This seems to me to be the point of Jesus’ instructions in v. 3:

And he said to them, “Take nothing for your journey, no staff,¹² nor bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not have two tunics.” (9:3)

¹² “There is a problem in *no staff*, for in the first instance it is not easy to see how this would in any way hinder the effectiveness of their preaching and healing, and in the second in Mark’s account they were to take nothing ‘except a staff’ (Mark 6:8). Various attempts have been made at harmonizing the two, such as the view that Luke means ‘no additional staff’ (but why would they want a spare staff?), or that we have variant translations of an

I can think of no other reason why Jesus would send His disciples out so unprepared except that it is so that they would learn from this extraordinary instruction that the mission of the kingdom depends upon the provision of the King. Edwards writes, “Jesus sends them into mission with a calculated deficit, reminding them clearly, perhaps even painfully, that they are prepared for mission only as they depend on him.”¹³ It should be noted that this is another extraordinary instruction, applicable only to the apostles. Jesus is not establishing a paradigm for all missionaries at all times, as is evident from Paul’s missionary journeys (Rom 15:24; cf. Lk 22:36). But the ordinary principle behind this extraordinary command abides—the mission of the kingdom requires the provision of the King, and we must trust Him to provide.¹⁴ This is one reason I do not think it is a bad thing when missionaries (like those from Reaching and Teaching International Ministries [RTIM]) have to raise support from churches before they can go to the field, as opposed to receiving a salary from a mission agency funded through a cooperative program (like those from the International Mission Board [IMB]). This six-month, or nine-month, or twelve-month process of prayerfully raising support is designed to teach these prospective missionaries to trust in the King’s provision, a valuable lesson they will need every day upon the mission field. It is also a means by which they may discern the Lord’s calling. For if the King has called them to go, He will provide for them to go; and if He does not provide for them to go, then He has not called them to go. The King *always* provides for the mission of His

Aramaic original (which was perhaps elliptical and might be filled out in more than one way). But so far no explanation seems really satisfactory. Perhaps both ways of putting it mean ‘Go as you are’; Leon Morris, *Luke*, TNTC (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1988), 182.

¹³ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 262. Edwards continues, “Service of Jesus is characterized by dependence on Jesus, and dependence on Jesus means going where Jesus sends, despite material shortfalls, and unanswered questions”; *Ibid.*

¹⁴ “In part, these instructions apply only to a peculiar period. . . . But, in part, these instructions contain a lesson for all time. The spirit of these verses is meant to be remembered by all ministers of the gospel”; J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on Luke, Volume 1* (1858; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2012), 223. “From time to time, some Christians have concluded that every missionary should travel the same way: not taking any supplies or asking for any money. This is a good example of bad exegesis. To begin with, Jesus gave these instructions most specifically to the apostles, but never to the rest of the church. Furthermore, the apostles were still in Israel, serving the people of God, from whom they had a right to receive hospitality. In addition, Jesus later told the apostles to do almost exactly the opposite. At the end of the Lord’s Supper he said, ‘But now let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack’ (Luke 22:36). So not even the apostles lived this way all the time. There is more than one way to trust God, and more than one godly way to gain the support we need for missionary work”; Philip Ryken, *Luke, Volume 1: Luke 1–12*, REC (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2009), 427. Morris suggests that this command was designed to keep the apostles moving: “The limitation on the acceptance of hospitality to that of one householder limited the length of their stay”; Morris, 183. The former explanation seems far more likely in light of Jesus’ similar instructions in Luke 10:7–8.

kingdom. On the night of His betrayal, Jesus asked His disciples, “When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?” And they said, “Nothing” (Lk 22:35).

While it is not the main point of this narrative, there is an application here to every Christian, and not merely to missionaries. Not only will the King provide for the ministers of His kingdom, He will provide for the subjects of His kingdom. In Matthew 6, Jesus tells His disciples (not the apostles only, but all His followers),

“Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” (Mt 6:31–33)

The King provides for His own. So His subjects need not be anxious about their provision, but rather trust Him to provide. For when we see Him face-to-face and He asks us, “Did you lack anything you needed to complete the work I assigned to you?” we will respond, “No, Lord; we lacked nothing.”

III. Guard the Motive of the Kingdom (v. 4)

Third, to be found faithful in the mission of the kingdom, we must guard the motive of the kingdom. Look at v. 4:

“And whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart.” (9:4)

What is the purpose of this instruction? It is to guard against the temptation to upgrade. When the apostles first arrived in a village or town, they could expect to be shown hospitality by someone within the village, perhaps one who had already heard of Jesus, one who was sympathetic to Jesus’ mission and message (in Lk 10:6, Jesus will call such a person a “son of peace”). But what if, after the apostles had performed a few miracles and cast out a few demons, offers of better accommodations started to come in—better lodgings, better food, etc.? There would be a strong temptation to leave the lesser accommodation and move to the better accommodation. But what would that make the apostle that did so? It would make him a hireling (Jn 10:12–13). What

would it reveal about his motive for the mission? It would reveal that his motive was money, and not the love of people and the love of the King. One commentator wrote, “The instruction for them to remain in one house (9:4) cautions them against switching to better-situated patrons. That action would blunt their message by betraying a greater interest in their personal comfort than their mission. They are neither to be beggars, going from house to house, nor peddlers, hawking the gospel for profit.”¹⁵

I do not want to paint with too broad a brush here, for there is also the principle of “he who has been faithful in little will be entrusted with much” (Lk 16:10). But I think those of us in vocational ministry would do well to contemplate why pastors invariably move from smaller churches that pay less to larger churches that pay more, and what Jesus’ instructions here have to say about that. But as every subject of the kingdom is in some sense a minister of the kingdom, this principle has application to us all. In whatever ministry you are involved, guard your motive. Is it recognition, the praise of men? If nobody sees or nobody says anything or nobody shows any appreciation, are you discouraged or disgruntled? If so, that is evidence that you are using the ministry to advance your own fame. Whether the motive is money or the praise of men, there is a temptation to use the ministry of the kingdom of God to advance your own kingdom. So guard the motive of the kingdom, which is the love of people and the love of the King.

IV. Announce the Warning of the Kingdom (v. 5)

Fourth, to be found faithful in the mission of the kingdom, we must announce the warning of the kingdom. Look at v. 5:

“And wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them.” (9:5)

According to rabbinic teaching, the very dust of Gentile lands was considered defiling. Thus, whenever observant Jews travelled to or through Gentile areas, upon their return to Palestine they would shake off the dust of their feet lest the holy land become defiled.¹⁶ Thus, to shake the

¹⁵ David E. Garland, *Luke*, ECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2011), 377.

¹⁶ “When Jews traveled outside Palestine, they were commanded to shake themselves free of dust when returning to Israel, lest they pollute the Holy Land”; Edwards, 262, citing Str-B 1:571 [*Kommentar zum Neuen*

dust from their feet upon leaving a village *in Israel* was to declare that village to be heathen.¹⁷ This is an extraordinary act that has massive implications for our understanding of the identity of God's covenant people and of God's covenant land. Edwards writes, "In applying a Gentile figure of speech to a Jewish village, Jesus desacralizes Eretz Israel [the land of Israel], and with it the presumption of salvation on the basis of ethnicity, nation, or race."¹⁸ In other words, now that the kingdom of God has come near, the holy land is no longer a geographic location in the Middle East belonging to an ethnic people. Just let that sink in for a moment. On the one hand, Jesus declared that those who reject Him as King are excluded from His kingdom, regardless of ethnicity, and that the land of Israel was neither holy nor sacred. On the other hand, those who receive Him as King belong to His kingdom, and wherever His kingdom is, there is the holy land. So who are God's holy people? Those who repent and believe in the King. And where is God's holy land? Wherever the King reigns. And where is that? In this age, Christ reigns physically in heaven, and spiritually among His saints on earth. In the age to come, when heaven and earth are united, Christ's reign will extend throughout all creation. At no point, then, from the first advent of Christ to His second advent and beyond, is there a geographical holy land belonging to an unrepentant, unbelieving people. This has massive implications for everything from our church's eschatology to our nation's foreign policy.

But this command also has massive implications for individuals who encounter the gospel of the kingdom. There can be no neutrality in regard to the kingdom of God. The ambassadors of the King go forth with an absolute, sovereign demand— "Repent, and believe the gospel." Those who receive and rest in Christ as Savior and swear allegiance to Christ as King will enter into the kingdom and receive all of the blessings of kingdom citizenship, both now and throughout endless ages. Those who refuse, those who persist in their rebellion and who reject Christ as King, will be treated as enemies of the kingdom on that day when the King comes in His glory. Beloved, you do not want to be an enemy of Christ on that day. Take care, then, how you hear this sermon. The King has come, and He has inaugurated His kingdom. This is the age of mercy and pardon, the age in which His gracious terms of surrender are issued. Lay

Testament aus dem Talmud und Midrasch, ed. H. Strack and P. Billerback, 6 vols. (Munich: Beck Verlag, 1926)]; Morris, 183.

¹⁷ "The commandment to shake the dust off your feet' is thus a sharp judgment, declaring an inhospitable Jewish village *heathen*"; Edwards, 262–63.

¹⁸ Edwards, 263.

down your arms, give up your sin and self-rule, submit to rule and reign of Christ, and you will be blessed by the King beyond your wildest imagination. He will forgive all your sins and pardon all your rebellion. He will heal all your diseases—the disease of your soul through regeneration, and the disease of your body through resurrection. He will make you an heir of His everlasting kingdom, and will grant you ever-increasing joy in His presence forever. But the day of grace will not last forever. The day is coming when His wrath will be revealed against His enemies, whom He will bring into judgment and everlasting ruin. Hear, then, the cry of the King:

“Come now, Let us reason together, says the LORD:

though your sins are like scarlet,

they shall be white as snow;

though they are red like crimson,

they shall become like wool.

If you are willing and obedient,

you shall eat the good of the land;

but if you refuse and rebel,

you shall be eaten by the sword;

for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.” (Is 1:18–20)

V. Extend the Mercy of the Kingdom (v. 6)

Fifth, to be found faithful in the mission of the kingdom, we must extend the mercy of the kingdom. The apostles obeyed the command of their King, for Luke reports in v. 6:

And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere. (9:6)

I have already dealt with the extraordinary nature of the apostolic ministry, a ministry of signs and wonders. But I thought I would mention something that a number of commentators point out, which is that there seems to be a dual focus in their apostolic ministry, reflecting the dual focus in Christ’s ministry. You will remember that when Jesus announced the beginning of His messianic ministry, he quoted from Isaiah 61 and declared it fulfilled in their hearing:

*“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” (Lk 4:18–19)*

Christ came to redeem the whole person (body and soul), for the whole person (body and soul) was enslaved to corruption, in bondage to sin and death. And while the redemption of the body primarily awaits the resurrection at the second advent of Christ (Rom 8:23), I do think that Jesus establishes a pattern for kingdom ministry that He commands His apostles to replicate and extend. I suggest, then, that the mission of the kingdom is to include both the preaching of the gospel and the ministry of mercy.¹⁹ Listen to Philip Ryken, who says,

We are called to a ministry of *both* word and deed, and these two aspects of ministry should never be separated. As the church, we must seek to meet people’s physical as well as spiritual needs. This means caring for the sick, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting prisoners, welcoming strangers, and showing hospitality to the homeless. We do these things because Jesus did them. We do them because God cares for our bodies as much as he cares for our souls. And we do them because meeting people’s needs helps confirm the truth of our message.²⁰

Likewise, Norval Geldenhuys writes,

We must go into the world and (1) preach the kingdom of God—summon mankind to the realization that His divine and saving sovereignty has been fully manifested in the advent, passion, and triumph of Christ, and that they must repent so that they may, to His honour,

¹⁹ “The two distinguishing hallmarks of the church in every age are preaching the gospel and works of mercy”; Edwards, 263.

²⁰ Ryken, 423.

share in the wealth of His mercy as He even now imparts it to every member of His kingdom and as He will impart it fully at the end of the age; (2) we must continue His works of mercy by working also for the deliverance of mankind from their physical need—through poor-relief work, care for orphans, hospital services (especially in the mission field), institutions for the blind, prayers for the sick, work among prisoners and other undertakings in the service of suffering humanity.²¹

Jesus may not grant to us the power to heal miraculously and instantaneously (though He may, at times); but He has granted us the gift of mercy to meet the needs of a people suffering with sin-cursed souls, in sin-cursed bodies, in a sin-cursed world.

VI. Beware the Enemies of the Kingdom (vv. 7-9)

Finally, to be found faithful in the mission of the kingdom, we must beware the enemies of the kingdom. In vv. 7–9, Luke records, almost as an aside, the reaction of Herod Antipas to the ministry of Jesus and His apostles:

Now Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was happening, and he was perplexed, because it was said by some that John had been raised from the dead, by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the prophets of old had risen. Herod said, “John I beheaded, but who is this about whom I hear such things?” And he sought to see him. (9:7–9)

We have already met Herod the tetrarch in Luke 3:19–20. John had publicly rebuked him for his adulterous marriage to his brother Philip’s wife; and in consequence, Herod had imprisoned John, and eventually put him to death (Mt 14:1–11; Mk 6:14–29). Now, reports of Jesus’ ministry, and that of His disciples,²² reached Herod. Speculation abounded in Galilee, which was the epicenter of Jesus’ three-year ministry. Some said he was John the Baptist alive from the dead, others that he was the eschatological appearance of Elijah (Mal 4:5–6), still others that he

²¹ Norval Geldenhuys, *The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951), 265–66; quoted in Ryken, 423–24.

²² “By including Antipas’ question in a unit devoted to the disciples, Luke may imply that fears earlier aroused by Jesus are now also aroused by his disciples”; Edwards, 263–64.

was the reincarnation of one of the prophets of old. At any rate, Herod was fascinated (and probably not a little frightened). He would eventually succeed in meeting Jesus while in Jerusalem during the Passover, when Pilate sent Jesus to Herod for trial (Lk 23:6–12). Herod demanded of Jesus a sign, but Jesus did not deign to give him an answer. At this, Herod mocked him and sent him back to Pilate.

The point is that the mission of the kingdom takes place amidst the enemies of the kingdom, a truth Jesus will make explicit in Luke 10 when He sends out the seventy-two disciples:

“Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.” (10:3)

Mark it down, and burn it into your brain. The mission of the kingdom of God will always take place in the midst of the kingdom of this world, which means that the mission of the kingdom will always take place in the midst of the enemies of the kingdom. The kingdom of God will not come on earth until the King returns. We await no advent of some imagined Christian nation; there will be no kingdom of God upon the earth in this age. In this age, Christ’s kingdom is not of this world (Jn 18:36). This means that the mission of the kingdom must proceed in the midst of opposition, and the ministers of the kingdom must be fearless. Matthew 10 forms our marching orders in this age:

“So have no fear of them, for nothing is hidden that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.” (Mt 10:26–33)

The ministers of the kingdom must be fearless in the mission of the kingdom.

Of Kingdom Members and Kingdom Ministry

I began this morning with the following thesis statement: *If you want to be a faithful member of the kingdom, you must receive the gospel of the kingdom. If you want to be a faithful messenger of the kingdom, you must follow the instructions of the King.* I conclude, then, by calling those of you who stand outside the kingdom of God—you are unbelieving and unbaptized—to enter the kingdom of God invisibly through repentance and faith, visibly through baptism. And First Baptist Nixa, let us be faithful in the ministry of the kingdom of God. This we will be if we:

- Proclaim the gospel of the kingdom;
- Trust in the provision of the kingdom;
- Guard the motive of the kingdom;
- Announce the warning of the kingdom;
- Extend the mercy of the kingdom; and
- Beware the enemies of the kingdom.