



“Look at Them”
Luke 9:49-56

Idea: The believer’s view of the Kingdom greatly impacts one’s effectiveness with the gospel.

Intro: What does greatness look like in a leader? Most of us can easily spot it. Regardless of whether you are a student or an adult with years of experience in the workplace, you can tell the difference between great leadership and poor leadership. So, what is the difference between the two? I believe it comes down to how a leader genuinely shows care and concern for those under their leadership.

I came across an interesting article in *INC. Magazine* titled “8 Critical Things Every Great Leader Remembers.” In this article Kevin Daum argues that every great leader keeps the following things in mind so that their teams are happy and productive. Here are the eight things they remember to offer:

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| 1) Kindness. | 5) Truth |
| 2) Respect. | 6) Encouragement |
| 3) Patience. | 7) Gratitude |
| 4) Humor. | 8) Hope |

Each of these things show care and concern. It is interesting that everything I have ever learned about leadership comes down to one thing, focusing on people. Great leaders know people’s names, care about what is going on in their lives, and look out for their good. They put others’ needs before their own. History’s greatest leader is Jesus Christ, and He modeled this same focus in front of the men and women He led. Jesus listened to people, spoke truth, showed kindness, demonstrated patience, and offered hope. He came not to be served but to serve. His disciples, however, were slow to learn from His example. As we have seen already in our study of Luke’s Gospel, the disciples argued among themselves about who was the greatest. They had become proud about their status and abilities. They seem to have given themselves elite status. In Jesus, on the other hand, we see that true greatness is the antithesis of pride and elitism.

Last week, we discovered that the believer’s attitude greatly impacts one’s effectiveness with the gospel. As we move to the next passage, we will again see Jesus’ great leadership. He always has His eye and concern on others. From it we will discover that the believer’s view of the Kingdom greatly impacts one’s effectiveness with the gospel.

Read Luke 9:49-56.

Inquiry: The disciples did not have much love for one another. If they had, then they would not have argued over who was the greatest (9:46-48). In our verses today, Luke records for us that their lack of love also extended to believers outside their own group as well as to the Samaritans.

The disciples had seen a man casting out demons (vs. 49). They had not heard a rumor or a report. They were eyewitnesses to a miracle that many of them had just recently failed to perform (9:40). This man did the right thing with the right motive. Luke notes that he was casting out demons in Jesus' name. He is engaged in the work of the Kingdom. This is good, gospel work that is taking place, so why would the disciples want to stop it? I believe the simple answer is that their perspective of the Kingdom was faulty.

In verse 51, we see a major turning point in Luke's Gospel. For the next ten chapters, Jesus will be on the road. This move toward Jerusalem will culminate with the Triumphal Entry (19:28-44). Luke will make several allusions to this journey throughout these chapters (9:51-57; 10:1; 11:53; 13:22, 33; 17:11; 18:31, 35, 19:1). Here he makes it clear that Jerusalem and what awaits Jesus there now looms large in the Lord's thoughts. He will soon experience everything involved in His being "taken up."

Obviously, the Twelve and the other disciples believed they understood what was to take place with their Teacher, but like Peter many of them over estimated themselves. They missed Jesus' simplest warnings (9:44-45). They also failed to catch the greater implications of Jesus and His mission. They misunderstood the teachings on the coming Kingdom. Love, mercy, forgiveness, and grace were still largely foreign concepts to them. These men were willing to incinerate an entire village of Samaritans because they rejected Jesus.

These verses call believers away from their natural tendency to focus inward, and they force a new perspective. It is a call to look outside of yourself. Instead of saying, "Look at me," we are to say, "Let's look at them." Believers need to view the Kingdom of God through the eyes of Jesus because the believer's view of the Kingdom greatly impacts one's effectiveness with the gospel. There are two truths we need to recognize.

1. The Kingdom is greater than the tribe.

Verse 49 tells us that the Twelve attempted to prevent a man from doing the work of the Kingdom. This man was not part their tribe, meaning he was not one of the Twelve. Yet, he was doing the very same thing they had been sent out to do. John's description of how they had responded to this man comes on the heels of Jesus' rebuke of their argument over who was the greatest (9:46-48). They had not yet learned the lessons of humility and service. Jesus' response to John was both a prohibition ("*Do not stop him*") and a principle ("*for the one who is not against you is for you*"). Jesus wanted His followers to exemplify an inclusive heart rather than an exclusive one. The Kingdom tent was bigger than what they saw of it.

While the disciples might have been jealous for Jesus and themselves, Jesus was not threatened. There are many other examples of this unthreatened attitude in the Bible. In Numbers 11, Joshua rushed to warn Moses that some of the elders (Eldad and Medad) were preaching and thus stealing some of Moses' prominence. His reply to Joshua reveals his big heart. Moses said, "*Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!*" (Num 11:29).

The apostle Paul also demonstrated an inclusive and non-threatened heart. While in prison in Rome, he learned that rival preachers were using his incarceration to promote their own ministries at his expense. Rather than being outraged, Paul responded with grace and a Kingdom perspective. He said, "*What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice*" (Phil 1:18).

We could also mention how Jonathan was willing to take a step back for David. He was the son of the current king, but David was God's pick to replace King Saul. Jonathan committed his life to making David the next king (1 Sam 18:1-4). Then there is John the Baptist who responded to Jesus' ascension by saying, "*He must increase, but I must decrease*" (John 3:30). He and these others were willing to set aside any personal desire for prominence and surrender to God's Kingdom plan.

Today, we need to learn from these examples and remember that the Kingdom is greater than the tribe. We might think of the local church as the tribe. Or perhaps if we went a little broader, the tribe might be our denomination. Therefore, if the Kingdom is greater than the tribe, then what we are saying is the Kingdom of God is much bigger than our church or denomination. I think many Christians will be super surprised when they get to heaven because there will be people there that they did not expect. There will be Baptists, Methodists, Catholics, Presbyterians, Lutherans, Episcopalians, non-denominationalists, and others.

As Christ followers, we need to be open to working with other believers of similar faith and practice. None of us hold the market share on the Kingdom. And none of us can do the work of the Kingdom on our own. The exorcist might not have used the same verbiage in his work or looked like the Twelve, but Jesus' words about him reveal that he was part of the Kingdom and engaged in Kingdom work. Therefore, we should support and even look for opportunities to engage in Kingdom work with other believers and churches who believe and preach the true gospel.

Tribalism is a reality that we need to recognize because of how often it overshadows the greater Kingdom. This loss of perspective can also lead to prejudice and hatred, which brings us to a second truth to see.

2. The Kingdom tempers justice with mercy.

In verses 51-56, we are confronted with the ethnic tension that was present between the Jews and the Samaritans. The Samaritans were a people who were partly Jewish and partly Gentile. This intermarrying took place after Assyria conquered the ten northern tribes of Israel in 722 B.C. After the exile, when the Jewish people from the southern tribes were resettling in the land, the Samaritans came to claim their spot among Israel. They, however, could not prove their lineage because of their mingling with the Assyrians. The Jews considered them half-breeds and religious apostates. The Samaritans responded in like manner. They then set up a rival temple and religious system on Mount Gerizim. The Jews answered by publicly cursing the Samaritans in the synagogues and praying daily that they might not enter eternal life.

The hate between these two tribes was real and raw. Therefore, it should not be all that surprising to read that the Samaritans rejected Jesus. We also should not be shocked by James and John's offer to Jesus. These sons of thunder were dead serious. They were living up to their family name. They hated the Samaritans, and their rejection of Jesus was highly offensive. So, out of jealousy for His honor, they desired to see the Samaritans destroyed. Now, perhaps, they offered to call fire down from the heavens because they had just been up on the mountain with Elijah. They were very familiar with the story of how the great prophet called fire from heaven to burn up the sacrifice and prove that Yahweh was God over Baal (1 Kings 18), so maybe they wanted to emulate his greatness. Regardless of their motivation, Jesus rebuked James and John.

Luke intentionally tells us that Jesus and the Twelve left that village in Samaria and went on to another village. I find it significant and not at all coincidental that Samaria would be the center of a great gospel movement and the first place reached outside of Jerusalem (Acts 8). The lesson we learn here is how important it is to be friendly to people who reject Jesus. The person who rejects your presentation of the gospel today may be open to it tomorrow when life's circumstances change. I want you to think about how many times you turned away from Jesus' offer of forgiveness and redemption before being saved. What if He had acted like James and John and called fire down from heaven on you? You would have justly been a crispy critter. But where would God's grace and mercy have been in that act of justice? No mistake, there will be a day when justice is served against all who have rejected Jesus. They will justly experience the full wrath of God the Father for their sin, but that day is not today. The Lord Jesus,

today, offers mercy and grace to all who will turn from their sin and by faith believe on Him for forgiveness.

Therefore, we learn from this passage how important it is for us to look at the people. We want to view the Kingdom of God through the eyes of Jesus who is always gracious and kind, gentle and patient, forgiving and true, and welcoming to all people. We want to do so because the believer's view of the Kingdom greatly impacts one's effectiveness with the gospel.

Conclusion: The Lord Jesus models great, Kingdom leadership for us in this passage. His focus was always on the people. He saw each and every individual who came to Him, and He looked at them through the empathetic eyes of a good shepherd. The people were like sheep without a shepherd (Matt 9:36). They were lonely, hungry, and in danger. As the Good Shepherd, Jesus welcomed them, fed their hungry souls, and removed the condemnation of their sin.

Today, as recipients of His glorious grace may we too look at the people all around us through the lens of the Kingdom. May we desire mercy for our neighbors, colleagues, family, friends, and community members. Let's see them as sheep in need of shepherd. Rather than overlooking or even rejecting people who do not look like or act like us, may we see and move toward them. May we remember that the Kingdom is greater than our tribe and understand that there are sister churches all around us engaging in Kingdom work. Let's celebrate and encourage them. The Kingdom is alive and active!

As a believer and member of God's Kingdom, what is the Lord saying to you today? Are you actively engaged in Kingdom work where you live, work, and play? Do you see the people who are outside of Christ as sheep in need of shepherd? If not, then what do you need to do to get a new and gospel-centered perspective?

Perhaps, today you need to come to the King because you are a sheep in need of the Shepherd. You are like the Samaritans in this passage. You are spiritually lost and dead in your sin. The Good News for you is that just like the Samaritans responded in faith to the gospel in Acts 8, you can turn to Jesus and by faith receive Him as your Lord and Savior. Will you come to Christ?