



“Sent”
Luke 9:1-6

Idea: Believers are given power and authority to preach and minister to people.

Intro: ²⁶Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...” ²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. – Genesis 1:26-27

These verses reveal that humanity was created in part to perfectly reflect the person, power, and purpose of God. While sin has broken God’s intention in the creation of man, it did not eliminate it. Men, women, boys, and girls all bear the image of God and are responsible for reflecting His glory, doing the works that He does. Allow me to illustrate this point.

During the World War II battles in the Pacific, a sailor in a United States submarine was stricken with acute appendicitis and was near death. The nearest surgeon was thousands of miles away. The sailor’s friend, Pharmacist Mate Wheller Lipes, watched his temperature rise to 106 degrees. The man’s only hope was an operation. So, Lipes said to his stricken buddy, “I have watched doctors do this operation. I think I can do it. What do you say?” The sailor consented.

In the wardroom the patient was stretched out on a table beneath a floodlight. The mate and assisting officers dressed in reversed pajama tops masked their faces with gauze. The crew stood by the diving planes to keep the ship steady. The cook boiled water for sterilizing. A tea strainer served as an antiseptic cone. A broken-handled scalpel was the operating instrument. Alcohol drained from the torpedoes was the antiseptic. And bent tablespoons kept the muscles open.

After cutting through the layers of muscle, the mate took twenty minutes to find the appendix. Two and half hours later, the last catgut stitch was sewn just as the last drop of ether gave out. Then, thirteen days later the sailor was back at work.

It was an incredible accomplishment, greater than the appendectomies done by surgeons. Not because it was better, for it was not. It was greater because an unskilled shipmate performed the surgery.

This story helps us understand an unfathomable promise Jesus made to His disciples shortly before he left the earth, when He said in the upper room, *“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father”* (John 14:12). The apostles, the early church, and believers from that day till the final day can do greater works than Jesus, not because they are greater works, but because of who we are – frail, sinful instruments empowered by the Holy Spirit.

As we move forward in Luke's gospel, we see that Jesus sent out His twelve disciples to do the very works He has been doing before them. As we have learned, Jesus is Lord over nature, demons, sickness, and even death. He possesses all power over these things. This, however, is not all that we have learned. Jesus is not only able to heal and resurrect people, but He also seeks out those who need His life transforming power in their lives. Now, we will learn that He also is able to empower His people to reflect Him and the works He has been doing as He sends the Twelve out to preach and to heal.

Read Luke 9:1-6.

Inquiry: These verses describe, as R. Kent Hughes says, "the apostles' pre-Pentecost taste of the miraculous ministering power, the 'greater works,' that would characterize their ministry after Christ is gone." We might look at this scene as a dress rehearsal for the post-Pentecost gospel ministry of the Twelve, and as such it reveals the principles of gospel ministry necessary to fulfill Christ's greater commission.

I believe it is important for us to first acknowledge that God is on mission. Jesus defined His mission to Zacchaeus when He said, "*For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost*" (Luke 19:10). This description, however, is not an isolated statement. The Lord's mission is on full display from Genesis to Revelation (cf: Gen 3; Rev 7:9-10) in both His activities and commands. With that said, there is a second thing for us to acknowledge; God's people are on mission. As Jesus ascended back to the Father, He commissioned His Church to carry on His mission (Matt 28:18-20; Acts 1:8).

In these verses, we discover principles for gospel ministry rather than a prescription for gospel ministry. In other words, the specific instructions given by Jesus applied uniquely and exclusively to the twelve disciples. They are not a pattern for all times. We are not to read the Lord's words and understand them as instructions for how to pack and plan for our next overseas mission trip. We know this because of Jesus' later words to His disciples in Luke 22:35-36, which are a reversal of what is said in Luke 9. These instructions given just before his betrayal and crucifixion become the pattern for gospel ministry. Therefore, what we are to learn from our passage today is that believers are given power and authority to preach and minister to people. The Lord Jesus has sent His church...His people...His bride to those who are far from God and suffering under the weight of sin and its debilitating effects. Believers are able and expected to do greater things. This is not because believers are better than Jesus at gospel ministry. Obviously, we are not. We are to do greater things as frail, sinful instruments empowered by the Holy Spirit.

As we think about being sent out by Jesus on mission with the gospel, there are three principles for us to grasp.

1. Trust the Lord's provisions.

Read Luke 9:1-2.

Jesus' selection of the twelve apostles was partially fulfilled when He sent them out to preach and to heal. Having been taught by Jesus and armed with the knowledge of the secrets of God's kingdom, they went out to proclaim the message of the kingdom and its Lord. The Twelve's mission here served as an apprenticeship for their ultimate mission seen in the Great Commission (Luke 24:45-49).

Read Luke 9:3.

The Twelve were to proceed unencumbered by possessions, depending instead upon God's providence and their fellow Jew's hospitality. They were to trust in the Lord's provisions because they already possessed everything needed to carry out and accomplish their gospel task. Jesus gave to them power ($\delta\acute{\upsilon}\nu\alpha\mu\iota\varsigma$) and authority ($\acute{\epsilon}\xi\theta\upsilon\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$) over all demons and to cure diseases. Power denotes capacity, energy, and force. Authority speaks of the right to use the power given. The Twelve were not exercising their own power. They were to exercise Jesus' power, and they had authorization to do so.

The power and authority Jesus bestowed upon the Twelve enabled them to overcome any obstacle and situation they would face. Like Jesus they would be able to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, and cast out demons (Matt 10:8). Nothing would be too difficult. Likewise, they needed no luggage or provisions on this trip because God would provide for their needs.

Today, as believers and followers of Jesus Christ, we understand and own the commission our Lord has given to us. Like the Twelve we have been sent out into a world in desperate need of Jesus and His gospel. We have been sent out to preach and minister to people who are dead and hurting in their sin, and we do so with the full power and authority given to the Twelve. While the commissioning of these men was unique to them, we learn from it that God will provide for us too in our mission. He will meet our physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. He will give us the words to say and the heart to minister in any and all situations. As we commit to live out the gospel where we live, work, and play, God's Spirit will empower us to boldly and lovingly call people to faith in Jesus Christ.

Christian, you have been sent with the gospel, so trust the Lord's provisions. There is sufficiency. There is a second principle in these verses for us.

2. Focus on the ministry in front of you.

Read Luke 9:4.

As the Twelve trusted the provisions of God, they were better able to focus on their appointed task. As they went out to preach and minister to people, ministry opportunities were right in front of them everywhere. In order to prepare the Twelve for the incredible ministry opportunities, Jesus instructed them to take nothing with them and trust the Lord to provide lodging for them in every place. Jewish hospitality would meet this need. So, as they entered a new area and were invited to lodge, the Twelve were not to seek better accommodations. Instead, they were to be content. If we put the scene in today's terms, it was okay if the room did not come with a full breakfast or a strong and hot shower. There was no reason to be concerned about whether there was a hot tub or a pool. They were not to think about how many reward points they were building up. The Twelve were not being sent out on vacation. They were being sent out on mission.

When I go on vacation, I am cognizant of the hotel's accommodations. When my family and I are at a tropical resort, I am looking for fine cuisine, a beautiful surf, an exquisite pool, and a really nice gym. Those things are important to me because the days we are there are all about vacating the hustle and bustle of normal life. I want to relax and be rejuvenated.

The mission the Twelve were sent out on was not a vacation. It was work. There was a task at hand, which required their undivided attention. They were to focus on the ministry right in front of them. It was there in the homes of the people where they were staying. It was in the neighborhood where that home resided. It was in that city or village. You see, there were people who desperately needed to hear the gospel and be drawn to Jesus. This was to be their focus.

Today, as we think about our contribution to fulfilling the Great Commission, may we realize that we too must focus on the ministry right in front of us. That ministry largely resides in the places and among the people you frequent the most. It is where you live, work, and play. Are you focused on the people you know within those circles of influence? Let's not be distracted by lesser things.

Christian, you have been sent with the gospel, so focus on the ministry in front of you. There is purpose. God in His providence has placed you there for such a time as this. There is a third principle in these verses for us to see.

3. Move on when there is no receptivity.

Read Luke 9:5.

In the case of a hostile reception, Jesus ordered the Twelve to shake off the dust of their feet as a testimony against them. Jesus is not suggesting here that these men were to act in a hostile manner toward those who rejected their message. Rather, it was a dramatically gracious warning to those who rejected the kingdom message. It was customary for pious Jews who had traveled abroad to carefully shake the dust of alien lands from their feet and clothing. This act dissociated them from the pollution of those pagan lands and the judgment that was to come upon them. The same action by the Twelve symbolically declared a hostile Jewish village to be pagan or Gentile-like. It was a merciful prophetic act designed to make the people think deeply about their spiritual condition. This ceremonial act undoubtedly made a strong impression on people and brought some to grace.

Jesus instructed the Twelve to make this gracious demonstration toward those who would reject their message. Jesus, however, did not instruct them to quit and come home at the first sign of disbelief or outright rejection. No, they were to move on to the next village and the next opportunity.

Today, as we seek to live out the Great Commission where we live, work, and play as well as working together to spread the gospel abroad, Jesus' words challenge us to keep moving and advancing the message of the Kingdom. These words remind us to expect resistance. It will and does come. Knowing this means that we should not lose heart or become disillusioned by it. Instead, we should just move on to the next person, family, and opportunity the Lord has in front of us. We continue to pray for and love those who have rejected the gospel and our ministry, but we cannot and must not stop sharing with others until those who have rejected believe. No, we move on when there is no receptivity, knowing and believing that others will receive the gospel and be saved.

Christian, you have been sent with the gospel, so keep advancing it where you live, work, and play. As a local church, let's work together to preach and minister the gospel to far from God people in faraway lands. There is a mission. Let's join Jesus in His mission because we have been sent.

Conclusion: As believers we have been given power and authority to preach and minister to people. Have you ever wondered why the Lord has ordained this strategy for advancing His Kingdom? There is no doubt He could do it better on His own. There is no doubt the angels of heaven would do a better job. Yet, in His sovereign wisdom, God has staked the future of heaven on redeemed sinners. He has modeled the gospel ministry for believers, and He empowers believers to go and do as He has done.

Pharmacist Mate Wheller Lipes had never performed surgery before. He was not a surgeon. He had never been trained as a surgeon. He was trained in pharmacology. He understood drugs and how to use them medically in various situations. Lipes, however, had participated in several surgical procedures. His responsibility was to ensure the patient was under anesthesia. Having been in the operating room and observing appendectomies, he had a base knowledge of what to do and how to do it. And so, in that moment of crisis, when there was no other option, Lipes reflected all that he had seen and learned from the surgeons in the operating room before. His successful appendectomy was incredible and greater than all others because of his lack of experience and ability.

As believers and followers of Jesus Christ, we understand that Jesus and the angels could run circles around us in gospel ministry. At the same time, we know that Jesus has chosen to advance His Kingdom through His Church. He is working through redeemed sinners who are not yet all that we will one day be in glory. We are weak, timid, distracted, and flawed, yet as believers we are empowered. We possess the full power and authority of God to preach and minister to people. Therefore, as heaven's ambassadors may we trust the Lord's provisions, focus on the ministry in front of us, and keep moving and advancing the gospel. God in His

sovereignty has uniquely and strategically placed each of us within circles of influence, which He wants to leverage for the gospel, so let's begin to see ourselves as those who are sent to the people where we live, work, and play. At the same time, we know He has sent us to far from God people in faraway places.

Today, as a Christian will you recommit yourself to evangelism and missions? Will you begin to pray for and engage those who need Jesus in your circles? Can you see their faces? What are their names? Maybe this morning, you need to come to the altar and pray for them by name, asking God to empower you to engage them.

Today, not everyone here is a believer. As an unbeliever, the message today is not calling you to go and share because you must first receive and believe the message of the gospel. So, will you come to the Lord today? Will you turn from your sin and place your faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior?