



# Central Peninsula Church

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Luke 9:1-9

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## What Would ~~Christians~~ Jesus Do?

SERIES: *A Savior for All People*

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A local pastor named Dan Kimball filmed video interviews on the University of Santa Cruz campus to show at his church. They asked each person they interviewed to answer two questions:

1. *What comes to mind when you hear the name Jesus?*
2. *What comes to mind when you hear the word Christian?*

The answer to those questions brought both joy and sadness. At the first question, students' faces lit up in smiles, and they said things like, "Jesus was beautiful." "I want to be like Jesus." "I want to be a follower of Jesus." "Jesus was enlightened." Such encouraging answers! On a secular campus students were eager to talk about Jesus. They weren't always familiar with all of Jesus' teachings, but they had a high opinion of Jesus as an extremely positive figure in history.

But at the second question, their responses changed dramatically. Eyes looked downward, smiles turned to frowns and even pained expressions. "Christians have taken the teachings of Jesus and really messed them up." "I would want to be a Christian, but I have never met one." "Christians are dogmatic and closed-minded." "Christians are supposed to be loving, but I've never met any who are."

Most discouraging of all was that only one person out of 16 even claimed to know a Christian personally. Their conclusions were based on general observations and hearsay. What they knew of Jesus, they liked, but what they knew of Christians, they definitely didn't like.

I'm not sure if we can really blame them for their opinions of Christian, since most of them didn't even know one. If no one is living out their faith in front of them, how will they know anything different? And let's face it, much of what they read and see in the media portrays Christians as unloving, narrow minded and just plain mad. Even if they ventured to visit a church, chances are they might see something well-polished and impressive, but a far cry from the simplicity of how Jesus lived and what he taught.

Perhaps believers need to reexamine themselves. Are what we do and how we do it reflective of the real Jesus? Luke 9:1-9 is a great passage that helps us answer that question. Here Jesus gathers his 12 disciples together and sends them out on their first mission. He wants more

people exposed to his message. He cares about the lost. From the start Jesus has been shaping these 12 men in such a way that they could carry on his work after he was gone. In chapter 5, he called them from fishing boats and tax booths to follow him. In chapter 6, he specifically set the 12 apart so they might be with him and he might send them out to preach. But it's not until here in chapter 9 that Jesus actually sends them out. But before they go he gives them some careful instructions.

### JESUS EQUIPS US WITH HIS POWER AND AUTHORITY

The first thing Jesus does is give them something. Look at v.1. **"And He called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases."** We've seen his power and authority over nature and demons and disease and death. Now he gives them that same power and authority. Back then, authority meant that the one sent is as the one who sends. So when the demons saw the disciples, it would be like seeing Jesus.

It's true for us as well. He sends us out with his power and authority. It's not about our personality and talents and training. It's not about who WE are, but who HE is. As a young man I was often impressed by the power and authority of other men. I tried so hard to be like them. I thought I could capture it by mimicking their preaching style and the tone of their voice and the way they held their Bible. I had to learn the hard way that it really wasn't about any of that. It's about his power and his authority. When we know that we can go out with a kind of humble confidence. We don't have to be afraid to tackle anything. Evil is deeply entrenched in our world today. If it were just us there would be so much to be afraid of, but it's not just us; we have his power.

Most of the time to experience that we have to be put in situations where our own power isn't enough. That's how it was with the twelve. Though these men had been with Jesus for a while, they didn't feel ready. Their faith was tested in the storm, and they failed miserably. Over and over again, we've seen how thickheaded they are in spiritual matters. These men still had a lot to learn, but Jesus sends them out anyway. Why? Why risk his reputation on these inexperienced men? Because he knew that they would never learn to rely on his resources until they were in over their own heads.

Sometimes we think we have to be thoroughly trained before we can be put to work. We have to know all

the answers. We have to know how to preach, how to lead someone to Christ, and how to pray in public with the right lingo. Only when you know it all and have it all down pat are you ready to go to work. But Jesus didn't operate that way. He sent these guys out to preach before they even understood what they were preaching about. There are some things you can't learn until you act; until you go. Most of us don't feel like we are ready to go out and be a witness for Christ. We don't have all the answers. We're not polished speakers. We're no match for the evil powers. But if we wait until we feel ready, we may never go at all. Jesus sends us out, and we're forced to rely on his power, not ours.

### **JESUS EXPLAINS THE WORK WE ARE TO DO**

So they have his power and authority, but what were they to do with that? In v. 2 Jesus tells them more about the specific work they were to do. **“And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing.”** So they're called to the twofold job of preaching the kingdom and healing diseases.

Today we talk more about preaching the gospel than preaching the kingdom. But there really isn't any difference. If you peek ahead at v.6 you can see that they went out “preaching the gospel.” The fact that the kingdom had arrived in the person of Jesus was the good news. Imagine a king showing up who has power and authority over all evil. Eventually he will destroy everything that is wrong with our world. And now people were being given the opportunity to join his kingdom. They simply had to turn away from all of their other allegiances. That's good news. That's the good news the disciples were sent out to preach. That's the good news you and I are sent out to preach.

The other thing they were called to do was heal diseases. This would actually be one of the ways people would see that the king had arrived. Miracles were audiovisuals of God's kingdom at work. He has power over diseases. And we know that the apostles really did heal. In the book of Acts Peter even raises the dead! But what does this mean for us today? Some argue that while God still occasionally performs healings today, there is no *gift of healing* in the church – that is, no one performs healings as Jesus or his apostles did. Others argue that the gift of healing still functions today, so that one can have a ministry like that of Jesus and the apostles, who could heal on demand.

It might be helpful to note first what both sides agree on. Both affirm that God does miracles when he chooses to. In other words, the disagreement is not between God's performing miracles or not.

Rather, it's whether God still gives specific people the consistent ability to heal and desires ministries to focus on healing. Those who argue God does NOT work through the gift of healing today believe that gifts of healing were given for a limited period to introduce the arrival of the kingdom. They also point out how Jesus de-emphasized his own miracles, for fear that people would focus on the signs rather than on him (Luke 11:29). Those who do see the gifts for today argue for a healing ministry in a manner similar to that of Jesus and the apostles.

Personally, I'm NOT convinced that the gift of healing functions today. Even those who claim to heal, don't do it *carte blanche* the way Jesus and his apostles did. One modern proponent of a healing ministry has even acknowledged that the rate of success for those who come for healing is about two percent. That's very different from what Jesus or the disciples appeared to yield. Though God does still heal, I don't expect the consistency of the healing aspect of Jesus' ministry to be replicated today. He still has the sovereign right to heal, and he does. But I question whether God continues to give the gift of healing to individuals as he did with the apostles here.

The most important thing for us is to recognize today is that we're called to both preach God's word and to perform deeds of compassionate service. For us to truly reflect Christ in our witness, we have to reflect his message but also his compassion. When we do that, what comes to mind when people hear the name Jesus will be the same thing as when they hear the word Christian. People need to hear the gospel, but they also need to see it lived out. Typically, conservative believers like ourselves are concerned more for preaching than compassion, while more liberal believers are concerned more with compassion than preaching. Jesus calls us to both.

### **JESUS PROMISES TO PROVIDE FOR US**

We also have to reflect his simplicity. Look at vv. 3–5.

**“And He said to them, ‘Take nothing for your journey, neither a staff, nor a bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not even have two tunics apiece. Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that city. And as for those who do not receive you, as you go out from that city, shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.’”**

Jesus begins here by telling them what to take in terms of personal provision. He says they're to travel light. They're not to even pack a lunch. They're not to take a “bag” which back then was something beggars carried. They're not to take any money for travel expenses. They're not to take an extra tunic or cloak to keep them warm at night. They're not to take a staff for protection against wild animals and villains. The strange thing is that in Mark's gospel he tells them that they could take a staff. The idea here seems to be that they're NOT to go out and acquire a

staff for the trip. They're not to go on a shopping spree before the trip. If they had a staff, that was different.

Jesus also tells them here what to do when they enter a town. He says when they enter a house they're to stay there until they leave town. The idea is that they're to accept the hospitality they're offered as God's provision, and they aren't to disrespect their hosts by going out and looking for an upgrade.

I've had to learn this on some of the overseas trips I've taken. I love to travel, I love to eat the food and see the sights. But I've learned that when I go somewhere to serve I have to drop my agenda for all of that. I've been housed in some places I would have rather not have stayed in. I've been in situations where going out for a meal would be viewed as wasteful. But I've also stayed in places that were more than I could ever expect. One trip I went on somehow Jack Murray and I ended up flying first class on one of our flights in eastern Europe. We were the only first class customers on the plane. They thought Jack was a Scottish ambassador. We couldn't believe it! We laughed all the way. No more plastic cups. You see, sometimes God surprises us. I've never flown first class in my life. I had to become a missionary to have that privilege! The key for us is that we drop our agenda; we're not on a vacation; we're not tourists; we're there to serve.

Jesus also tells them what to do when a place rejects them. Hospitality was a big thing in those days. To turn down a stranger was a shameful thing to do. And so, if no one in that town opened their home to them, they were to leave and shake the dust off their feet. They weren't to stay around and try to talk them into changing their minds. Back then, when a Jew traveled to pagan lands and came back home, he would shake the dust off his sandals as a symbolic gesture that he was disassociating himself from the gentiles. Here, the disciples are to do this as a solemn sign of judgment to the people of that town. It was an act designed to make them think about their decision of rejecting the gospel. This doesn't mean we're to be short fused and hostile towards those who reject the gospel, but there does come a time when our relationship with them may have to change, and there is a place for warning people of the implications of that decision.

The details of these instructions have to do with that particular mission of the disciples and aren't meant to carry over to today. For instance, it's not wrong for missionaries to take money or clothes or personal possessions with them. This was like "boot camp" for the disciples. We know that because later on, towards the end of his ministry, Jesus tells them to take the very same things with them that here he tells them not to take.

**"And He said to them, 'But now, whoever has a money belt is to take it along, likewise also a bag, and whoever has no sword is to sell his coat and buy one. For I tell you that this which is written must be fulfilled in Me, "AND HE WAS**

**NUMBERED WITH TRANSGRESSORS"; for that which refers to Me has its fulfillment'" (Luke 22:36-37).**

But these instructions DO teach us something important for today. They teach us that all who minister in the name of Jesus must do so in simplicity and in dependence on the Lord. This is true for those in full-time ministry and those who aren't. We have to be more committed to the task of fulfilling our mission than we are to providing for our own comforts. We have to believe that God will take care of our needs; doors will open in ways that we could never foresee. That's what Jesus is telling these men: You go out and serve; God will supply your needs. If we don't do that, it ruins our witness. What comes to mind when people hear the name Jesus will be very different than when they hear the word Christian. There are missionaries who live so far above the normal lifestyle of those they are trying to reach, people won't listen to them. That's a violation of this principle.

This is a challenge to me. When I went into the ministry 24 years ago I was offered a salary of \$16,500 a year. That wasn't a lot of money for a family of three, even then. But there was never any question whether we would take the job. We were called; God would provide. And he has, over and over again. But have I stayed dependent? Now I own a house and have a good salary. Am I dependent on the Lord?

We all have to wrestle with this. The Scripture tells us to work and provide for our families (2 Thes.3:6-15), but it also tells us to seek his kingdom first and trust that he will provide the necessities of life (Matt 6:33). Somehow we have to juggle those two things and learn to stay dependent on the Lord. I know I have to learn to do that today in a way I didn't 24 years ago. I have a hunch some of you do too. I wonder if in the last half of our lives God will call us to something that requires us to lay it all on the line. What would you do? What would you do if fulfilling his call on your life meant a radical change of lifestyle? Many of us want God to be more real in our lives. How will that happen? I can't see how it will happen unless we're forced to depend on him in unusual ways.

## **JESUS PRODUCES THE RESULTS**

The last thing we see in this passage is that when we go out and obey him, he produces the results. Look at vv. 6-9.

**"Departing, they began going throughout the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere. Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was happening; and he was greatly perplexed, because it was said by some that John had risen from the dead, and by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the prophets of old had risen again.**

**Herod said, 'I myself had John beheaded; but who is this man about whom I hear such things?' And he kept trying to see Him."**

You get the sense that they didn't stand there and argue with Jesus or negotiate the terms of their contract. They just went out and did what he told them to do. And when they obeyed, Jesus came through. All of a sudden, they were doing the very works of Jesus. He preached; they preached. He cast out demons; they cast out demons. He healed the sick; they healed the sick.

All of this created such stir that even Herod, the tetrarch of Galilee, joined the gossip about who this Jesus really was. Some thought Jesus was a resurrected prophet, possibly the murdered John, or the long dead Elijah who people believed would come back to bring in the age to come. But notice the key question everyone is asking, "Who is this man?" You see, that is where all of our preaching and witnessing and caring is to end – at the person of Jesus Christ. They didn't say, "Who are these apostles?" They said, "Who is this Jesus?" What came to mind when people heard the word Christian was the same thing as when they hear the name Jesus. We should so reflect Jesus that people will watch us and say, "Who is this Jesus? I want to know more about him?"

That's what we want. That's what gives us adventure and a sense of purpose in life. But it doesn't come automatically. We have to be willing to step out when we feel anything but ready. He'll equip us with his power and authority. We have to be willing to empty our hands and our hearts of all our stuff. He'll provide for us. We have to trust him for the results. He'll make people ask, "Who is this Jesus?"

## **CONCLUSION**

Let me just close by making a few points of application for us.

*First, God has cares about the lost. Do you?* I mean, that's why he sends us out. We can't just hold onto the gospel like it's some kind of buried treasure. It's meant to be shared with the whole world.

*Second, God uses people to reach the lost.* Is he using you? I mean, how does God do it? How does he reach out to others? He uses us. He didn't have to do it that way, but he did. How will your neighbors hear and see the gospel? How will the people you work with? Most likely, through you.

*Third, we must be willing to leave our comfort zones to reach the lost.* Are you willing? Like the proverbial mother bird pushing her young out of the nest, forcing them to learn to fly, God will push us out. It might just be him nudging you to take that risky next step in a relationship and bring up spiritual issues, or invite someone to church, or go to Romania.

*Finally, God equips us with everything we need to reach the lost.* Has he equipped you? We don't feel like we have what it takes. We don't know what to say. We're afraid of looking like a fool. Jesus says, "Here, I'm giving you my power and my authority." And with that, what comes to mind when people hear the name Jesus will be the same thing as when they hear the word Christian.