

11.30.25

Luke

Chapter 9 - A Peculiar Kind of Calling
Perplexing & Elusive to Some (vs. 7-9)

Luke 9:7-9: 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.

The Gospel of John in John 1 tells us that Jesus came unto His own, but His own received Him not. I can't understand that. How would you not receive the Messiah? The One you've been looking forward to seeing, God in the flesh, Emmanuel, God with us? The presence of God. Why wouldn't you receive that?

He goes on and says,

(John 1:12) “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.”

His name, Savior, Jesus. Savior of the world.

We come to this obscure passage once again in which Herod seems to be perplexed. How do we know that? Well, the text says he was perplexed. And we have to ask ourselves, why is he perplexed and why would the Spirit of God place this particular event within what we've been talking about up to this point, which is, the gospel being proclaimed, and many coming to Christ, oftentimes being healed? As Jesus would say in Matthew 11, “Come unto Me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” It seems as if those that do come to Him and those that seem to understand Him are the weary, are the heavy laden. They don't seem to be the privileged. They don't seem to be those that seem to have it all together. It's those that are, perhaps as 1 Corinthians 1 would say, weak and foolish; those that have humbled themselves under the mighty hand of God. It is through the difficulties of our lives that draw us to the Savior. Christ

came specifically not in the garb of majesty, that we would be attracted to majesty, but came in the garb of humility. As Isaiah 53 would say, He had no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him. Why? That you would not be drawn to those things, but that you'd be drawn to the love of God. Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Behold the One who comes to heal your sickness; the One who comes and is concerned for you. He's going to free you. He's going to free the prisoners. He's going to proclaim good news to those that are hurting. And so, He does.

Luke begins to reveal the very ones that are in the know, and it surprises us. You have a woman that's elderly, couldn't have children, and then all of a sudden the angel comes before her and says, "You're going to have a child." And so, she does, John the Baptist, at a late, late age. And an indigent girl who hasn't really accomplished anything in her whole lifetime, except remaining pure, and God says, "From you, the Messiah is going to be born." A virgin. Simeon and Anna, these individuals that are not important at all, but have been serving God with great

humility, see the Christ. Shepherds, keeping watch over the flock by night, have a huge chorus of angels proclaiming, “Glory to God in the highest.” And you guys get the wonderful privilege of proclaiming this message.

In that particular setting, if you go all the way back to Luke 3, Luke specifically wants us to see, as the Holy Spirit works through him, that God was fully aware that there were other individuals in the world that He could have talked to, that He could have met with. You know, if you're going to announce the Messiah, why not call all the dignitaries together and roll out the red carpet, do a great thing? In this particular passage, God wants us to know, “I know who was there. I just bypassed them.”

The passage reads this way,

(Luke 3:1) “Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar...”

Okay, so who's the Caesar? Tiberius. Which, by the way, is one of the reasons why when we pass Pontius Pilate, who's the governor of Judea, and now Herod the tetrarch, who we're going to focus on today, Herod the tetrarch, that is Herod the ruler of four regions, specifically two

that will stand out, Galilee and Perea. In those regions, he'll be over. Now, that wasn't really what he wanted. He, being the son of Herod the Great, he wanted basically to rule over everything, and he actually went to Rome to try to get that, but it just didn't work out for him. But that didn't stop him from trying, that didn't stop him from manipulating and going after the things that he wanted. What's interesting about this is we know that Herod, to get perhaps well-known or beloved by Caesar, Tiberius, actually built a city named Tiberius. He named it Tiberius, in Galilee. So, you'll to this day know that there's a city called Tiberius that he built and named so that he might get some sort of points for doing so. Unfortunately, as we talked about earlier, he built it over the graves of some of the Jews, and nobody wanted to live there, and so he actually had to bribe people to live there. But that's kind of the way that Herod thinks. He doesn't think as far as who it hurts. He just wants to get something done.

And so, as the text goes on, it actually lists the dignitaries. But it's in this realm, it even lists the dignitaries of the

high priesthood, which you go, “Well, that's certainly where God wanted to announce His Son.”

But it goes, after all this,

(Luke 3:3) “And he came into all the district around the Jordan...”

And it was in the wilderness.

If you back up into verse 2,

(Luke 3:2) “in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came...”

Not to any of those individuals, but to who? John. Yeah, just some vagabond in the wilderness. Why? Because he had not been adulterated by the world. The world had not bought him. And the message had to be clear, it had to be plain, that God so loves them. This is one of the things that Paul specifically talks about to the Corinthians. He says, “We're not as those who adulterate the word of God.” So, we're not like those who actually do this to get money. And there are so many people that are out there that try to work the whole money scheme thing. They try to get the widow's last penny, as the Pharisees would

oftentimes do. And they're in it. This is why Jesus, in this text, when He sends out His disciples, He says, "Don't take any money purse. Don't take anything to hold money. Because I'm going to take care of you. And if somebody wants to feed you, let them feed you." But as Matthew 10 would say, as Jesus talks to the disciples, "Freely you've been given, freely give." Obviously, Scripture tells us in 1 Corinthians, those who preach the gospel ought to get their living from the gospel, but never in a sense of trying to coerce people to give or do it for that reason. In other words, every minister out there, every missionary out there ought to minister for nothing. And if God chooses to give them something, that's fine. But it's the grace of God, it's the love of God that compels us to do this. You don't want money and the gospel coming together. You want to be unseparated.

It's in this setting, if you look in Chapter 9, that He sends out the twelve, and He says,

(Luke 9:2) "... to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing."

At what? At some charge? No, they just do it. And you realize that there is the great power that is coming from them by virtue of Christ.

And as they go, they're not to take anything for the journey.

(Luke 9:3) “... neither a staff, nor a bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not even have two tunics apiece.”

(Luke 9:4) Whatever house you enter...”

See if they're worthy. And once again, we're not trying to flatter people into heaven. My job isn't to find out what you like and then therefore try to move you into heaven by virtue of flattering you, or being so nice. I mean, nobody would go to heaven if it was up to me being nice. But it can't be those things that bring you into heaven. It's the Gospel. It's that God so loved you. Now, I need to demonstrate that love. There's no doubt about that. But it's not me. It's the love of God. That's why Paul will write, “Do you not know that it's the kindness of God?” I've often told people, it doesn't read in there the kindness of Gary. It says the kindness of God. And once again, we should be kind as He tells us to, and as His Spirit lives

within us but that's not the message that saves. I don't save you. God does. And it's His love. And what's interesting is, as they begin to proclaim this message, they're not going in trying to get something from somebody, or they're not trying to in any way please them or appease them. They're just proclaiming the message. And He says, "If they refuse, then shake off the dust at your feet and go on." Because the message itself is powerful enough.

Romans 1:16 says, it's the power of God. I believe the Gospel is powerful enough to save. I don't have to entertain you into the heaven. I don't have to wow you into heaven. I just proclaim that God loves you, and He died on the cross for you, and that He rose again. And He's coming again for you. And that's enough. He's washed away your sins when you received Him as the Lord, and how magnificent that day is. It's a changed life, and we've seen the changed lives of people.

Smack dab in the middle of all this is Herod. And Herod goes, "I don't understand what's going on." It's strange that the centurion knows what's going on. Remember the

centurion that comes, and he has this servant that he loves very much. The servant's at the point of dying, and he goes and runs to Jesus. He hears that Jesus is in the area, and he runs to Him, and he knows exactly what's happening. Jesus is the guy. It's strange that the woman of the streets goes into the Pharisee's house, hears that Jesus is there, and she brings an alabaster bottle and begins to anoint Him. She knows what's going on. This is the place of forgiveness. This is the place of healing. This is the place of love. "This is God that's come to visit me." But not with Herod.

It reads this way in Luke 9:7,

"Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was happening..."

It's interesting, the centurion heard too, but he heard of Jesus. Whereas in this text, Herod heard of all that was happening. What is that telling us? Where's his mind? On the events, on the things that are happening, not on the person.

When some of the disciples of John come to Jesus, He turns to them and He goes, "What do you seek?" That's

the question, isn't it? I mean, that actually defines whether or not you'll see Him or not. Some will see Him. Herod's father was confused, too. In Matthew 2, Jesus was born the King of the Jews. He hears of it. He can't seem to find Him. Now, He's in Bethlehem. It's just a few steps away from Jerusalem. So, all he has to do is get into his little buggy and go into Bethlehem. Nope, can't find Him. I mean, He turns everything upside down to find Him. He even kills all the male children to try to find Him. He cannot find Him. Why is He elusive to him? Why can't he understand what's going on?

“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.”

Now, that's bad news for Herod because he just killed him.

He goes on to say,

(Luke 9:8) “And by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the prophets of old had risen again.

(Luke 9:9) 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.”

But he couldn't. Luke 8:1-3 begins to talk about the women that were ministering to Jesus. And one of them was a wife of a man that worked in the upper echelon with Herod. But Herod can't find Him? He doesn't know what's going on? What's the perplexity? Why is it that some people come to church, they embrace the word of God, they see Jesus, and they become followers? And others go, “I don't get it”? What is the difference?

One of the things that Jesus does is He gives this example of the word of God is like seed that you throw out. We use the term “broadcasting”. Actually, it's where we get our word “broadcasting”; it's like seed being thrown out. And it actually describes in Luke 8:15 that there is a seed that falls on good ground.

Now, if you look with me in Luke 8:15, it describes the ground this way,

(Luke 8:15) “But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.”

Nothing could keep them from doing it. “Perseverance” means that they just continue. You've heard of people that kind of got religion for a short time, and that's all it really was. Because if it they received truth, it would have remained with them. That's fundamentally the theme of the Book of Hebrews, “If you endure to the end.” How do you know that you have the real thing? You endure to the end. Nothing can move you away from this faith.

Why is it that some embrace this to the point of, “I'm not letting go, and He's not letting go of me”? I think probably the answer is found in the Gospel of John. If you'll take a moment with me and turn with me to John 3, we come to some of the greatest verses, the most beloved verses in all of Scripture; verse 16 being the one that just jumps off the page, right? “For God so loved the world.” In the context, He's actually telling this to a pharisee of pharisees, a member of the Sanhedrin, which was thinking more legalistically rather than emotionally or

with an attitude of care. He tells Nicodemus, at a time in which he was even afraid to be seen with Jesus, because he comes to Him at the very time of night.

Verse 16 reads,

(John 3:16) “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

I like the way it follows,

(John 3:17) “For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.”

I mean, who wouldn't want to be saved? Who wouldn't want to be saved from their sins? Well, probably first of all, those that wouldn't admit that they're sinners.

He goes on and says this,

(John 3:19) “This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.”

Oh, I wonder if maybe Herod had another agenda. There's no place that you read where Herod goes, “You know, I

really would like to have forgiveness of my sins. I really would long to be with God.” No, He's concerned for his status. He's concerned for his position. And one of the reasons why he's perplexed and beside himself, which is actually what the term means, is because he believes that this Jesus could actually cause great problems for him. Jesus will refer to this Herod as “that old fox”; that sly, cunning, and strangely enough, it actually means the same in the Greek as it does in the English, “that old cunning individual,” that is trying to manipulate things for his own benefit. You don't see him coming, but he's working things out, just like his father. Self, and I would say selfish ambition, is his motivation. Because of that, he can't seem to see Jesus. In fact, he doesn't see Him as light. He sees Him as something to avoid.

That's why the passage goes on and reads this way,

“...and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.

(John 3:20) For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

(John 3:21) But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.”

But as many as received Him, as many as will embrace Him, is really what Scripture is talking about. That is to say, the heart that longs to come to God. Now, what is it that makes us come to God? Well, the woman at the street, she was so overwhelmed by her sin that she saw this opportunity to have, and the one woman that had been so in her sickness now 12 years feels like she if could just touch Him... It was the difficulty, it was the problems, it was the heartache. “Come unto Me, all who were weary and heavy laden,” and these are the ones that can see Him, because that's the Savior. And guess what? They're willing to drop their agenda to receive the salvation of God. They're willing to do anything to find relief because they have no hope in this world. These are the “called ones,” Scripture would say.

Deuteronomy reads this way in Deuteronomy 4:29; once again, I won't go into everything about the text, but in the context of the fact that there was going to be a day that

Israel's going to be humbled. They're going to come to a great humbling, and they're going to come to a time of distress. Humbling and time of distress. Sound familiar? And it's those moments that you go, "Help!" And where do you cry "help" to?

It reads this way,

(Deuteronomy 4:29) "But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul."

I wonder why Herod couldn't find him. I wonder why he was perplexed.

1 Chronicles 28:9 reads this way,

"... If you seek Him, He will let you find Him..."

Most people aren't looking for God. They're looking to find something that will gratify them, and they're pursuing their own selfish ambition. But they're not looking for God.

Psalms 85:9 reads this way,

"Surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him..."

(Hebrews 7:25) “Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him...”

James will put it this way,

(James 4:8) “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you...”

Why is it people aren't finding God? They're not drawing near to Him. And the Lord knows those who are His. And as John 2 says, Jesus can see the hearts of all men. Some are going, “I don't get it.” And they want to blame the messengers. They want to blame, “Well, the gospel's a little confusing, the Bible's so confusing. It's so big.” And so, I just point them to one verse, “Just read this one.” But why is it so confusing to people? Why is it that some people can read through the Bible and never really embrace it? Because they're not seeking God. They don't love Him.

Jesus will say in John 8, “The reason why you don't get Me is because you seek glory from one another. You're always worried about what everybody else is thinking.”

If you go back to Luke, when you look at the passage in particular, what you're going to see is that Herod is concerned about what everybody else is saying. Well, that's a politician, really. "What is everybody else saying? What is everybody else thinking?" It's not about who He is. I mean, John was saying, "Are You the One?" (Or rather his disciples were.) And Jesus goes, "Okay, the blind see, the lame walk. The poor had the gospel preached to them. What do you think?" And you can't miss Him if you're looking for the right things.

It says in Luke 9:7 that, well, maybe it could possibly be that John had risen from the dead.

And then it reads this way in verse 8,

(Luke 9:8) "and by some that Elijah had appeared..."

So, some said that it was John, some said that it's Elijah, and maybe others said it was one of the other prophets. What are we doing? Putting out our finger, wetting it to the wind, getting a consensus of what everybody else thinks. What that's telling me is that they don't care about truth; they just care about popularity. And they're more concerned about how people look at them rather than

their relationship with God. Put that aside and come to Jesus. Set aside all the concerns about what everybody else is thinking, and you cry and say, "I just want to know You." He'll make Himself real to you. I've had people that I sat down with, and they go, "I don't know what to do. I don't know." I said, "Let's pray." And I said, "If you'll pray with a sincere and honest heart, you'll come to Jesus." And as we begin to pray, tears begin to flow, and hearts begin to open, and sins are forgiven. And the person that was weighed down with all of those things stands up with great hope and great peace like they've never had before. Now, how can that happen? That can't happen just by reading any old book. It's the words of God. And it's the power of God moving in the life of the individual.

There's a passage, if you look with me, in Luke 10. And Jesus has a moment as He's talking with the Father. It's a great picture.

(Luke 10:21) "At that very time He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit, and said, "I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to

infants. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight.

(Luke 10:22) All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.”

That's a supernatural thing to see God. I'm not talking about a visual aspect. I'm talking about to come into His presence, to feel His presence with you, to feel His forgiveness of the sins, to know and have a confidence. As Paul would say, “I know whom I have believed and am persuaded.” How could you have a persuasion? Acts 4 talks about the disciples, that they spoke with all boldness, and they recognized that these were unlearned men, but how could they speak with all boldness? They were like those who had been with Christ. And there was a change. That's what we're talking about. The magnificent change that comes about that really is a Divine thing that is God. I mean, 1 Corinthians 12 will say, no man can confess Jesus as Lord except by the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God, as you come and you begin to

confess your sins and you cry out with all your heart, "Save me," guess what happens? He does. And the presence of God is with you. The Bible says that His Spirit now dwells within you, and you have become a new person. Old things have passed away; all things have become new because now you're in Christ.

Look with me in 1 Corinthians 1, just as a reminder as well, that it's not always, well, I would say the sharpest tool in the shed that comes to the Lord. You would think, but it's not an academic thing, is it? It's not an academic thing. In fact, it's a humbling thing. And it's one of the reasons why the word of God is almost over-simple. You think about the gospel, "For God so loved the world, He gave His Son, His only begotten Son." As the Old Testament will say, He gave His right arm. We would say He gave His heart. And His heart became flesh and dwelt among us. And God gave of Himself. He died for you that you would have everlasting life. If you believe, you'll live forever with Him. Wait, just believe? Yeah. Trust in Him completely. Which means that you'll do whatever He says, right? That's why lordship ties directly to believe.

Because if you believe, if you trust somebody, you'll do whatever they say. You'll make Him the Lord of your life. And that's why Romans 10 will say by virtue of you coming to Christ, you'll just confess Him as Lord. But 1 Corinthians 1 talks about the fact that this is a strange message.

In fact, it says in verse 18,

(1 Corinthians 1:18) “For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing...”

They go, “You guys are idiots.” (I've been called worse.)

“... but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

(1 Corinthians 1:19) For it is written,

“I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE,

AND THE CLEVERNESS OF THE CLEVER I WILL SET ASIDE.”

(1 Corinthians 1:20) Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?”

I was thinking scientists get these huge telescopes; they even send spaceships out there, and they go, “Look at the universe. We're trying to figure out the universe.” We're

trying to figure out the universe instead of searching for God. Isn't that strange? That's exactly what Herod was doing. He goes, "What are these things that are happening? I have to investigate these things that are happening." You're not going to find God that way. Seek God.

(1 Corinthians 1:21) "For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God..."

I don't care how big your telescope is, you're not going to come to know God that way.

"... God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe."

It's a foolish message. It sounds foolish. I think sometimes we as believers are hesitant about proclaiming the simplicity of it because we think, "They're going to think I'm nuts." But it's the foolishness of the message preached that saves those who believe.

(1 Corinthians 1:22) "For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom."

And you can philosophize yourself to death, but you're not going to come to a saving knowledge and a freedom of your guilt and your sin.

(1 Corinthians 1:23) “But we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness,

(1 Corinthians 1:24) but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

(1 Corinthians 1:25) Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

(1 Corinthians 1:26) For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble;

(1 Corinthians 1:27) but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong,

(1 Corinthians 1:28) and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not...”

Why the woman of the street? Why does she embrace God? Why does she get Jesus? Why does the guy sick, why does the woman that is burying her son, why do they get Jesus? Why doesn't Herod get Him?

Paul will write in Chapter 2,

(1 Corinthians 2:1) “And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God.

(1 Corinthians 2:2) For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.

(1 Corinthians 2:3) I was with you in weakness...”

At that time, Paul had suffered a lot of physical problems, one being stoned. I mean, if you're stoned, that could hurt, and it doesn't do too well for your joints. He comes to them in weakness and in fear and much trembling.

(1 Corinthians 2:4) “And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,

(1 Corinthians 2:5) so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men...”

Nor on the majestic things that happened. This is why we don't have big fanfares in this church. I'm not sure if we could do it anyway. But as we've oftentimes said, the world does Disney better than us, but we do real better than them. And what God is calling is the Spirit of Truth. Do you believe?

“So that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.

(1 Corinthians 2:6) Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers...”

I.e. Herod the tetrarch.

“... of this age, who are passing away;

(1 Corinthians 2:7) but we speak God’s wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom...”

What would be the wisdom that would be hidden to the world? The love of God. You start talking about the love of God, they go, “I don't get it. So, how much money do I get?”

“But we speak God’s wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory;

(1 Corinthians 2:8) the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood...”

Would we say perplexed?

“... for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”

And yet they did exactly what God ordained them to do, as Peter would say, right on target. They had no idea what they were doing. They had no idea what was happening. But God was saving. And they could not keep Him buried. Death could not hold Him. And we believe that. And we believe that death cannot hold us. And we believe that to be absent for the body is to be present with the Lord, as 2 Corinthians 5 says. And we believe that someday we'll forever be with the Lord. It's a strange Gospel. A lot of people just don't get it. Some people might even walk away today, going, “I don't get what he was talking about.” Yeah, it hasn't been revealed to you because you didn't come with a believing heart. If you come with a

believing heart, if you come with a heart that desires to know Him, draw near to God and what? He will draw near to you.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we come before You today, and our desire is to draw near to You. We love You. We can't imagine why You would love us. Why, while we were yet in sin, You would die for us, but You did. Why, on the cross, You would cry out, "Father, forgive them, but they know not what they do," but You did. It is because of this that we'll be forever grateful, that we give You our lives. A God who loves so much, the God who loves so much. If You spared not Your own Son, how would you not with Him freely give us everything?

Your heads bowed and your eyes closed, I'm just asking you to get real with God. Don't come to church just to come to church. You're wasting your time and everybody else's, especially God's. But come to know Him. Let the words of God abide in you richly. Listen to what He's telling you. You could live forever with Him. You could

have your sins forgiven. No more condemnation to you who are in Christ Jesus. As far as the east is from the west, He removes your sins to remember them no more. Freedom of guilt, regret, because God can turn even the bad things you did into good if today you walk with Him. Jesus will say to Martha, "I'm the resurrection and the life. You'll live even if you die. Do you believe Me?" Do you believe Him?