

12.14.25

Luke

Chapter 9 - A Peculiar Kind of Calling Moved by Unpopular Convictions (vs. 18-22)

Luke 9:18-22: And it happened that while He was praying alone, the disciples were with Him, and He questioned them, saying, “Who do the people say that I am?” They answered and said, “John the Baptist, and others say Elijah; but others, that one of the prophets of old has risen again.” And He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” And Peter answered and said, “The Christ of God.” But He warned them and instructed them not to tell this to anyone, saying, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day.”

Jesus is the Christ. Shh! Well, that's what this passage is saying, isn't it? Peter finally confesses that He is the

Christ, and He says, “Tell no one.” I thought that's what the whole thing with the Gospels was about. It's proclaiming the good news that the Christ has come. The name Christ, “*Christos*,” that we oftentimes use simply means “anointed”. It comes from the Hebrew word “*mashiach*,” which means “anointed”. He is the anointed One. He is the anointed One that we've been waiting for from the beginning; from the beginning of time with Genesis, with Adam and Eve, specifically in Genesis 3, and then the promise goes on to Abraham. The promise goes on to Moses. The promise goes on to the prophets. We've been waiting for Him, the Christ. And now He reveals Himself. And Jesus says, “Shh, don't tell anyone.”

The Gospel of Luke has been an interesting study to me in many ways. In some ways, it is the book and is the gospel of the heart, because he focuses not on the external as much as he does the internal. And he begins to define different things that are happening that you would never know unless you knew the person's heart. Like “Mary pondered these things in her heart,” twice it's spoken of in Luke 2. When the shepherds come and they begin to

say what the angels had declared to them, it says that Mary pondered these things in her heart. And then with her son becoming of age, He goes into the temple, and says, “I must be about My Father's business,” it says, “Mary pondered these things in her heart.”

We just came out of Luke 8 where Luke will make reference specifically to the women that were ministering to Jesus. We would not have known that these women were doing this. However, Luke will record it. And Luke will even say that they were giving out of their, listen to the phrase, “private means”. You can just hear the, not overtly, covertly. And really, all through the book, you have these interesting pictures of things being silenced. I mean, even when you think of the very beginning of the Gospel of Luke with Zacharias, he wasn't believing and the angel goes, “You can't talk.” And so, he closed the mouth of a priest. Boy, that must have been torture. And so, he would not talk. The silencing of the word. And you'll see that continually. In fact, the ones that you'll see being vocal are ones that are kind of hidden, whether it be a Simeon or an Anna. These are individuals that you never

would have perceived would have a voice, or Elizabeth or Mary in these kind of things. Shepherds, being the ones that proclaim the news rather than dignitaries, how strange and bizarre is this? And all the way through, we see that. We see the demons proclaiming that “You are the Christ,” and Jesus going, “Quiet, silence.”

I oftentimes think of the passage in Psalm 50:16, in which God declares in that particular text, “What right do you have to declare My word?” Now, He's talking to the wicked specifically. And His point is that “If you're not going to represent Me appropriately, then you shouldn't be speaking of My word.” I think we forget how wonderful a word it is and how holy it is that we actually get the privilege of proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ. But I am taken back by all the times that Scripture... I mean, it's not just the demons, it's the leper, “Tell no one, but go to the priest first.” And as we went to the family, remember the family, they had the daughter, and she was 12 years old, and she had died, and Jesus brought in with Him just three of the disciples. And then after He finishes and raises the girl from the dead, He

turns to the family, and He goes, "Don't tell anybody about this." And all the way through the gospel you're seeing this. In fact, Luke will not concentrate on great miraculous events. He won't concentrate on long dissertations, perhaps like Matthew would, nor of the great kingdom. It'll be Luke that will talk about shepherds, fishermen, tax collectors, women, Samaritans, the prodigal son, the woman that comes out of the city and the man on the cross. And these will all be individuals that are not in a respect of overt, but covert. It is because of this that I am taken aback by this paragraph that we're looking at today, because so much is left out. And I am amazed at the fact that we have this Gospel of Luke, which is the largest of all the Gospels. I oftentimes tell people, Luke writes more of the New Testament than anybody else. Most people think, "Well, that's Paul." Nope, Luke. And he only writes Luke and Acts. But they're long books. And so, it's because of that, he ends up being the author of more of the New Testament than anyone else. So, here is the largest gospel. And yet the details that are left out of this one paragraph, to me, are amazing. I remember thinking through it this week and

I'm going, "Why, Lord, would you have Luke not mention all the other things?"

The timetable that we're dealing with, if you look with me in Luke 9, is, well, we know that He calls the twelve together, and He sends them out, and they go out, and they begin to proclaim. And then right after that, there's the feeding of the 5,000, which brings them into the whole process of really making application to the declaration that they're giving. The declaration is, "Good news, and Christ has come for the poor, and He's come for..." Well, they're in the process of feeding and helping and ministering. And so, you can see the on-the-job training with the feeding of the 5,000. If you were to compare this gospel with, say, Matthew, Mark, and John, which, interestingly enough, Luke is considered one of the synoptic gospels, which means that it's more alike, but I would say it's interesting that he doesn't record, because he goes right from the feeding of the 5,000, and he goes into Jesus in prayer, and then the disciples coming to Him, and then Him asking, "Who do people say that I am?" And then Peter making the confession. And if you knew all the

things that were in between there, you would ask too, "Why is he not bringing in the other stuff?"

So what is the other stuff? Well, just to let you know, if you were to take Mark 6 through 8, he's going to record the things that are not in there. And some of the things that are not in there is after He feeds the 5,000, shortly after that He feeds the 4,000. I don't know if you know that or not. And oh yeah, Peter, in his confession, you know, Jesus will say, "Upon this confession I will build My church," that's in Matthew, that He'll actually state that, but Luke will not record that. And in the process of them feeding the 4,000, and then the whole dialogue with Peter, he also won't mention, "Get behind me, Satan," which I think is a pretty interesting point that you probably would throw in. But here's the clincher, in this time, they get in the boat, and the sea gets really hectic, and Jesus begins walking on the water! And they think it's a ghost. And then Peter wants to walk on the water. Remember the whole scenario? It's not recorded. Walking on water, that's pretty big stuff. I don't know why you wouldn't put in the walking on water stuff. So, the feeding

of the 4,000, walking on water, all those things are not there. In fact, what else Luke does not do is he doesn't tell us where exactly they are.

We know that they've been in Bethsaida, which is kind of at the north part of Galilee, but the Gospel of Mark and Matthew will actually tell us that it's in Caesarea Philippi. Now, you normally think of Caesarea as being right on the Mediterranean, and there is a Caesarea there. But this Caesarea Philippi is actually north of the Sea of Galilee. Now, because I'm stating these things and talking to you about these things, I'm seeing a lot of blank stares, and I understand that, because maybe geography wasn't your forte. But this is very interesting, because Jesus starts heading up towards the north, and I would say the most northern boundary of Israel at this juncture.

Where the text opens up in Luke 9:18,

“And it happened that while He was praying alone...”

See that? According to the other gospels, we know where it is. He's up in the region of Caesarea Philippi. Matthew will record that; Mark will record that. Okay, so where is that? Well, it's about 25 miles north of Bethsaida, or from

the top of the Sea of Galilee. So, you start heading north. And as you're heading north, you come to the very end of the borders of Israel, and you start hitting this mountain. This is Mount Hermon. And as we'll go on and read in this particular chapter, there will actually be the Mount of Transfiguration. The question oftentimes is, where was the Mount of Transfiguration? Well, most of us believe that it was Mount Hermon, because that's where He's heading. He's in Caesarea Philippi, which is at the base of Mount Hermon. Now, Mount Hermon's about 10,000 feet high. You usually can see snow. And it is the biggest contributor to the Jordan as well as to the Sea of Galilee. I think a third of all the water of Israel comes from Mount Hermon.

One of our favorite passages, actually probably one of our favorite songs, if you go to Psalm 133; it's pretty interesting when your pastor talks about everything that's not in the passage. That's a rare event, really.

Psalm 133 reads this way,

(Psalm 133:1) “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is...”

Remember that one? We sing that song.

“...For brothers to dwell together in unity!

(Psalm 133:2) It is like the precious oil upon the head,
Coming down upon the beard,
Even Aaron’s beard,
Coming down upon the edge of his robes.”

And that means that it comes down upon his plate. And those are the twelve tribes. So, the oil is the anointing of God, and it goes on the twelve tribes of Israel.

In the text, we are at the most extreme boundary of Israel. I would say the furthest away from everything, into the realm of Dan. And there was a lot of false worship going on in that particular region. We'll talk about that in just a minute.

But then it's interesting, in verse 3, it reads this way,

(Psalm 133:3) “It is like the dew of Hermon...”

See that? That's what it's talking about, this big mountain and the waters. Even today, there's a path that you can follow with the water coming down from Hermon. I think

it's a continual 53 degrees. So, if you want to go swimming.

“It is like the dew of Hermon
Coming down upon the mountains of Zion;
For there the LORD commanded the blessing—life
forever.”

So, just to let you know where He is and when He's praying, though Luke does not make mention of it, I'm filling you in. And something else he doesn't make mention of, Caesarea Philippi was named by Philip. He wanted to make sure his name was remembered. But Caesarea, he wanted to honor the king. So, he actually builds a temple to Augustus in this particular region. So, you've got Caesar worship going on in one of the largest temples on the side of Hermon. It's pretty interesting. But as you come up to Mount Hermon, you come up to these cliffs in the rock and carvings. And in the carvings, are niches in which different gods are represented. Nemesis, Baal, different ones, and they have gods all in the side of the mountain. And different ones come and worship. And

if you contribute to the gods, then your name can be on one of those niches. So, that's pretty neat. But there is a huge cave right there at the foot, and it just goes continually deeper in great darkness. It is the cave of Banias. That's Arabic. The Greek would be "*Panias*". Now, that's actually where we get the word "pan," where he's called the "god of panic". We know him as Peter Pan. But about 200 years before Christ, the worship of Pan, the god of panic, was here. Part animal with the four legs, and then there he is playing a flute as a human in the upper torso. And this god was worshiped. This cave is actually called the gates of hell. And they believed that this was the opening of the gates of hell. Peter will give his confession here, and Jesus will say, "And I tell you, the gates of hell will not prevail, this confession." It's an interesting picture that is given in this particular region. Luke will not describe that. He won't tell us where we are. He won't make mention of these events that happened that are so grand. He's not concerned with that. He's concerned with the heart. Now, these other gospels are letting us know these things because they are things that we need to know where this is. But Luke is going to bring

us to the heart. And it's one of the reasons why, once again, it's so endearing and should be to us, is that he's concerned about, and God is concerned about what we're thinking.

At the beginning of Luke, in Luke 3, it says that the multitudes had a state of expectation in their hearts. That's interesting. How would you know that the multitudes were looking for the Christ in their hearts? But Luke will record that. Luke will record just exactly how they were feeling and what they were longing for.

So, this passage picks up, if you look with me, in Luke 9:18,

“And it happened that while He was praying...”

And I would say it would definitely be a place to pray, because people were confused about all kinds of things, what kind of things, and who to worship, and how to worship. They were at a place in which, and what an interesting picture, you're actually coming to the very end, the very furthest outskirts of being close to God, if you can kind of picture it in a physical way. Because you're not near Jerusalem, you're away from God, in the

very boundaries. You would almost call it a godless place. And yet God had ordained that this would be the place in which blessings would flow. A place in which we would feel so estranged from God, God would say in the Psalms, "No, this is where the water comes from." And you have this wonderful picture that is given. And it will be through the confession that God will describe this wonderful blessing that comes from the profession of Peter.

But it says,

"And it happened that while He was praying alone..."

And here again, Luke wants us to know that this is a private matter. This is the heart. When you read Matthew 6, you read about Jesus talking and describing how you should pray. Remember how He says, "Don't pray like the Pharisees. They go to the street corners and they announce things." He said, "Go in your room, close the door. Talk to your Father in secret. He sees you." He's praying alone.

"... the disciples were with Him, and He questioned them, saying, "Who do the people say that I am?"

Multitudes usually, if in fact you're wanting to get facts, are not the source to go to. What we know is that they're fundamentally thoughtless in their speculations. We know that they're concerned for popular consensus. Ultimately, they're basically coming up with what they believe through heartless contemplation. That's the best way I can put it. If in fact you ever want to see what it looks like, one of the best chapters to go to is John 9, in which, if you recall, Jesus had healed a blind man. And so, the blind man's walking around, he now sees. And different people were talking to each other, consensus, and they were saying, "Is this the guy?" And the other group was going, "I don't think so." And then the other group was going, "I think it is." And then the blind man comes up, he goes, "It's me! It's me!" And then they go, "No, I don't think so." So, once again, for factual statements, you don't want to go to the multitudes.

Nevertheless,

(Luke 9:19) "They answered and said..."

Well, they knew what the multitudes were saying.

"... "John the Baptist...""

Now, at this point, John the Baptist is dead. So, according to Herod, he had to have been risen again. And of course, some of the people are thinking that maybe he had been. However, here again, it's clearly heartless conjecturing, and the reason I would say that is that there's no taking into consideration the personality of who John the Baptist was. I mean, if John came back from the grave, he'd still be John, right? So, John was pretty much serious-minded, very much Law-oriented, and in many respects, straightforward and condemning, i.e. the Law. In fact, Jesus makes mention of this. He says, "You look at John and you say, 'This guy's too strict.' And you look at Me, and you go, 'You're too slack.'" So, there was clearly a difference in the personalities of the way and the mission that they had. And with any kind of thought, they would have gone, "No, he doesn't act anything like John.

Because what we see is, as Jesus describes Himself in Luke 4 and He describes Himself in Luke 7, to John is He's the guy that's healing people; He's the guy that's showing compassion to people. So, it's a very different ministry. The condemnation is necessary for you to realize that you're a sinner, but there needs to be the open arms. And

as Galatians says, the Law is a tutor to lead us to Christ. In other words, you have to get lost before you can get saved. You have to understand that you're a sinner before you can embrace a Savior. And so, what the Law does is it goes, "You do know you're not perfect?" And I know some of us are going, "Wow, an epiphany." But ultimately, what the Law does is it then takes us to Christ because you realize by the time you finish reading the Law, if you've ever read it, you can't walk away going, "I think I'm a pretty good person." So, what the Law does, it takes that point, and it leads us to a Savior. It leads us to a point where we go, "I need to be saved. Someone needs to rescue me because I can't do this." And that's the glory of the Law.

"... "John the Baptist, and others say Elijah...""

Of course, Elijah would just as soon burn you at the stake than look at you. And here again, part of the Law.

But some were saying John the Baptist, some say Elijah, probably thinking that he went up in a chariot and probably came back down in a chariot somewhere along the lines.

“... but others, that one of the prophets of old has risen again.”

(Luke 9:20) And He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” ...”

I thought this to be very strange in the sense that the beginning of Luke 9 starts off with, He calls His twelve together, gives them authority, sends them out to proclaim the gospel, right? Now, He asked them, “Do you know who I am?” I mean, I would have thought that might have happened right before that. Nevertheless, there is a point to it, and the point is, “Have you been listening to what everybody else says? Or have you been contemplating in your heart what is?” And, you know, you come to realize that our faith is not an overt thing. It's a conviction. It's an eternal conviction. It's something that God does within our hearts. Scripture tells us that you and I cannot confess Jesus as Lord except by the Spirit. It would be impossible for us to do that. But that conviction is so powerful that men are willing to die for that. Even though everybody else is against Him, even though everybody else is saying something else, there's

something inside of us that goes, "He is the Christ." And as Peter was so aptly put it, "Where else can we go? You alone have the words of eternal life."

"... "But who do you say that I am?" And Peter answered and said, "The Christ of God.""

"You're the anointed One. You're the one we've been waiting for. You are of God."

(Luke 9:21) "But He warned them and instructed them not to tell this to anyone."

Now, I can understand Him warning the demons, because you don't want a bad advertisement. You know, you don't want demons going, "That's the Christ, that's the Christ." And I can understand that the leper, when he was healed, he needed to go back to the priest because he needed to show that he was cleansed. I can understand that. And I can understand Zacharias not being able to talk because he was unbelieving. But these are believers and these are men that have been following Him. So, why is it that He doesn't want them to say it? See, when you realize this declaration that He's the Christ, that's pretty much a death sentence to even say it. Jesus will say that as He

goes through the Gospels and even to the point of coming to the Pharisees, and they said, "Tell us, are you the Christ? Just tell us right up." He says, "If I said I was the Christ, you wouldn't believe Me." But more than that, what Christ is wanting to do and is conveying to the disciples is this has to be something internal; it can't be something that convinces people. And let me just say this too, that we as we proclaim the gospel unapologetically, Jesus saves. He's the answer. But I can't make you believe that. That's the work of the power of the Spirit of God. I can't twist your arm. I can't force you into it. Church was never meant to do that. We are broadcasters. End of story. God is the one that changes the hearts. And this is such a bizarre thing, when somebody confesses, if in fact they receive the Spirit of Christ, they're willing to die for that at that moment. You don't work into that. At that moment, you're willing. That's how powerful the confession is.

And what the passage is saying is, if you look in verse 22, is Jesus is saying, "I don't want you to say this yet because you don't have the power to sustain it." Oh, why is that

true? Well, one of the things that Luke will do is he'll take us into the work and the power of the Holy Spirit, like no other gospel does. And of course, the whole book of Acts is about the Spirit of God coming upon the church. And Jesus will even say right before He leaves in Acts 1, as He's getting ready to ascend into heaven, "You're going to be My witnesses after the power has come upon you." So, what did they have to do? They had to wait until Pentecost, until the Spirit of God came upon them. Because when you begin to proclaim that Jesus is the Christ, it is instantly a death sentence. You're instantly going to be thrust into all kinds of situations that are way too overpowering for you. And let me just add this, too, without the Spirit of Christ, there is a misrepresentation and a misperception of who Christ is.

Let me give you an example. In Luke 9:54, James and John see the Samaritans. They're holding Him back. Actually, the Samaritans are holding Jesus back from walking through Samaria. And James and John say anything that any red-blooded American Jew would say, "Let's kill them. Let's call down fire from heaven." Jesus fundamentally

says, “You have no idea why I'm here.” So, at that juncture, there's a misrepresentation of who He is. Even when Jesus is hanging on the cross, there are shouts of people, “If you are the Christ, save Yourself.” There's a whole misunderstanding of who He is, of who the Christ is, which can only be revealed through the Spirit of God. Peter talks about the fact that the prophets prophesied these things, and then they began looking into these things, and they still couldn't understand what they were prophesying. And then they realized that they were not prophesying for themselves, but for you. In other words, they write about the sufferings of Jesus, and they go, “We don't get that. How can a Messiah, how can the Christ come and rescue us and yet be a Lamb that's crucified?” I mean, you go through Isaiah in particular, and you read chapters 9 and 11, and you go, “Okay, I get the fact that He's coming.” But then as you go on a little bit further and you hit Isaiah 53, He was going to be like a lamb led to the slaughter. He had no stately form of majesty that we should look on Him. And you go, “How does this match? You know, that, I mean, a child will be born, the government will rest on His shoulder, and you're talking

about crucifixion here? You're talking about a Lamb being slain?" There's just no way to bring the two together. It's dichotomous in our heads.

So, Jesus states, if you look in verse 22,

(Luke 9:22) "... "The Son of Man must suffer many things..."

Well, that's not the Messiah, really, is it?

"... and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day."

"You don't understand what you're putting in your mouth right now, guys. This is not the time for it. You're not ready to handle all that's going to come upon you."

Remember that passage in John, "I have many other things to say, but you can't handle them now"? "You have so many things that are going to come upon you." And Peter goes, "No, I can handle it." And of course, we know that he didn't, right, as he takes that position. What Scripture is letting us know is that, and Luke in a very interesting way, is that in these very subtle moments, you're going to be making decisions. A conviction is going

to come upon your heart. That's God. You're going to hear something that nobody else has figured out, everybody else is still discussing, they're kind of working through the process. But this is yours. And the Spirit of God is going to talk to you. The Spirit says, "Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your heart." You're going to hear the Spirit's voice, and it's going to be transforming in your life. And a conviction will come in your heart, and that will be the thing that holds you. Paul had questions about this and was concerned, of course, we're all concerned when somebody first comes to know the Lord, we're thinking, "Well, they're just babes in Christ." You know that's true, they're just babes in Christ. And so, as he's ministering to the Thessalonians, he's only there a week, a couple of weeks or so at the most, and then he has to leave them, and now they're being tortured and having to suffer all kinds of things, and he just says, "I've got to get back there." And God won't let him go back. And then he finally gets a message, "We're okay. We're willing to die for this." And he's going, "I should have known. It's the power of God." When we preach about the gospel, when we preach about the name, when we preach about there

is salvation in no one else but Jesus Christ, we're telling you that there's no possible way that you could embrace that unless the Spirit of God moved on your heart. And I would say this, and once that happens, you cannot reject that. And it doesn't matter what I say, it doesn't matter what everybody else says, it doesn't matter. I've seen people be in the midst of all kinds of horrific doctrines. And like 1 John says, he goes, "The truth's in you. You don't have any need of anybody to teach you the truth." Because when you have the Spirit of truth (And that's what He's called in John 14, 15, 16) within you, you know it's true. And even though there's false doctrine out there, you're protected by that, by the Spirit that has sealed you into the day of redemption. And how miraculous it is when you consider that this confession is within us. And we have not just a moment of insight, but we have a conviction that will remain in us. And we cannot deny it. Scripture says, "Though we are faithless, He is faithful. He will not deny Himself." And who is He that is within me? Christ in you, the hope of glory. And I am so thankful for that.

Well, we're going to be talking about where they are and the battle and the whole Mount Hermon thing, but you can just feel this place that Jesus is at. There He is alone and all the other gods and the worship of all other things and the crowds going towards those things, and Jesus going, "So, who do you think I am?"

Closing Prayer:

Father, we give You thanks for Your word. And how wonderful it is that You encourage us through this simplicity, that it's not as much about the grandiosity of the moment and truly even walking on water, but it is about the confession that comes from the heart. You tell us in Your word that faith is the substance of things not seen, the conviction of things not seen. Conviction.

With your heads bowed and your eyes closed. I could never convince you to be convicted. I could never convince you to have a conviction. But the Spirit can. And as you open your heart to the truth, something will happen. We talk about it in terms of you received Jesus into your life. You received the Spirit of Truth in your

heart. It was the Spirit of God's Son that breathed within you. And everything became clear. Salvation became done. And you were convinced that you have everlasting life.