

Training the Next Generation of Disciples
Luke 9:1-17
Encountering Jesus Today

By Dave Urbanski

For our message this past Sunday, Pastor Scott continued our study in the Gospel of Luke — and as we opened chapter 9, we got a look at Jesus training and preparing his disciples for ministry.

As it happens, verse 1 sets up everything we're about to learn: "And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases."

Power and authority.

As Jesus sends his disciples to go out and preach the gospel — without him physically present — he also strips away all the tangible things they might otherwise look toward and rely upon for comfort and assurance. No money, no food. Just go and trust God — which would be the situation they soon would find themselves after Jesus departs Planet Earth. He was preparing them for that eventual reality.

This is the same reality in which we find ourselves, isn't it?

Jesus is not physically present with us, but as believers in him we've also received from him power and authority to carry out his will.

So, how are we responding to his command to go out and preach the gospel?

Pastor Scott expressed that we should possess a greater sense of confidence when we know who we are in relation to the Lord and what he has given us.

Still, it isn't easy. One of the most common speed bumps Christians face is fear and trepidation over declaring that Jesus is the only way to heaven. That's offensive to a lot of people! Always has been. Many of us are understandably afraid of being called judgmental or stupid for believing such a "hateful" thing.

But Pastor Scott shared something very important, which is along the same lines as Jesus' instructions for his disciples: If people don't "receive" the gospel message you share, don't take it personally. They may direct anger at you, call you names — but remember that ultimately they are rejecting Jesus, not you. Remember that the Lord is the one responsible for changing their hearts, not you. As Pastor Scott said — and as Jesus told his disciples — we must "shake the dust off our feet" and not carry the weight of rejection.

After the verses describing how Herod the tetrarch was “perplexed” over the growing crowds following Jesus, Pastor Scott shared with us what the Lord showed him about the feeding of the 5,000 (vv. 10-17).

We all know the account: From five loaves of bread and a pair of fish, Jesus multiplied them, and all the tired, hungry people were “satisfied.” But there’s more in the verses that, again, show Jesus preparing his disciples for ministry — and those are truths we also can apply to our lives.

The disciples, as usual, look to Jesus to solve the problem: “Now the day began to wear away, and the twelve came and said to him, ‘Send the crowd away to go into the surrounding villages and countryside to find lodging and get provisions, for we are here in a desolate place.’ But he said to them, ‘You give them something to eat.’”

The disciples must have been dumbfounded. Humanly speaking it’s an impossibility — there wasn’t nearly enough food! But Jesus said there was no need to send the people away or to buy food for them; instead he had the disciples gather the people in groups, after which he “said a blessing over” the five loaves and two fish. Then Jesus broke the bread and gave the loaves to the disciples. Still, they must have been thinking, “There’s still just five loaves and two fish, Jesus! This is crazy!”

It’s impossible to know exactly what the multiplication of the loaves and fish looked like, but for the disciples to actually get to play a part in this miracle must have been — as Pastor Scott expressed to us — a confidence builder for the disciples in relation to the “power and authority” Jesus already gave them!

Pastor Scott then shared another crucial truth. In John's Gospel, after the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus told the people who were gathering around him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.” (John 6:26-27)

Jesus sure was useful to the hungry people — he filled their bellies — and now they’re seeking him out again. But what do those people *really* want? What do *we* really want? Do we want Jesus to meet our needs and desires? Do we want to go to heaven because it’s a much better option than hell?

Or do we simply want Jesus?

Because when we become believers and disciples, we may not receive riches or earthly fulfillment or fame or significance ... but we *do* get Jesus. And he should be more than enough.