

Part 34: The Mission of Jesus

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October 9, 2022

We are back in the book of Luke. We resume our series walking through the gospel account of Jesus. To refresh our memories, Tyler last left us just before the passage read in Luke 9. We began a series of events that give us a window into what it is like to follow Jesus. To follow Jesus as a disciple. That window is through the lens of the twelve disciples that followed Jesus and were taught by him during his ministry on earth.

To put it simply, we are in a section that is looking at what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. If you've been around Sovereign Hope for a while, even a short while, you'll probably know we love discipleship. By that, we mean simply, helping one another follow Jesus, in all of life, through the gospel.

As the apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1, "follow me as I follow Christ." The life of the Christian is one of discipleship. Following Jesus, learning and being trained in what that looks like from more mature believers, and then doing the same for others, helping them follow Jesus.

This inertia of discipleship is important to us as a Church, as Christians, because it was important to Jesus. It's the way he chose for the church to continue the work of the ministry of the gospel is through discipleship.

This morning we are going to look at three episodes, really two episodes, with a quick aside after the second, we are going to look at three episodes that point to the varied realities of the identity of Jesus. Three episodes, each with the disciples present, that point to foundational truths about who Jesus is, that inform us what it looks like to follow Jesus. After all, how can we really follow someone, strive to be like them, to emulate and honor them, if we don't really understand them?

To follow Jesus faithfully, means seeing Jesus rightly. This is our effort this morning through the middle of chapter 9. We want to understand who Jesus is, so that we may follow him more faithfully, and in greater obedience. We are going to see three aspects of Jesus' identity, **1. The glory of God in Jesus, 2. The compassionate authority of Jesus, 3. The gospel Mission of Jesus.**

Three aspects of who Jesus is, none of which we can neglect if we want to be his disciples.

Luke 9:28-29. This event follows a moment Jesus had with the twelve, where he foretells his death, and tells them what it will be like to follow him. Namely the cost of following him: the suffering, the sacrifice, the challenge of following Jesus in world where sin reigns. They go to a mountain to pray, and as 'he' was praying, something incredible happened: **1. The Glory of God in Jesus.**

This event, where three of his disciples are present, is what we know as the transfiguration of Jesus. Where the essence of Jesus' glory began to shine through him to a degree visible to those with him. Face shimmering, garment shining. Bright white.

The word for 'white' here is specific. It shows up 25 times in the NT, and 16 of those 25 are in the book of Revelation. It is the purest shade of white imaginable. So pure, that it can hardly be grasped outside of a vision from God to the apostle John in the book of Revelation. It represents perfect, unstained, glorious, holiness. One pastor calls it the "the grand apocalyptic color."

What is shining through Jesus at this moment on the mountain is the purest essence of his God-ness that the disciples will witness in his incarnation. The physical manifestation of his glory. This is not a glory placed upon him, a mask of pure glory that descends from above down to cover him. No! This is the radiant glory of Jesus that emerges from the essence of his being. A stunning show to his disciples that the meek, humble, carpenter of a man that these men have walked with, does not capture the entirety of Jesus' identity.

But Jesus and his disciples are not alone on the mountain in this literally, glorious moment. **Luke 9:30-31.** Moses and Elijah joined him, also appearing in glory, and spoke with Jesus. Moses representing the Law, and Elijah representing the prophets. The whole economy of the OT present with Jesus: the Law and the Prophets. Further, both of these men had previous encounters with God's glory. Moses on the mountain, as the glory of God passed before him, and Elijah in a cave as well as his departure from earth, as one didn't die but was caught up in the glory of God and brought into heaven. Both yet again bear witness to the glory of God, this time in Jesus.

And we saw both of these men previously in chapter 9, **Luke 9:7-8, 18-19.** Luke is hammering home the point, Jesus is distinct. Jesus doesn't come only as a representation of the OT Law, or as the prophetic word of God, but as the messiah and savior who fulfills both the law and prophets.

Peter, James and John got to witness this moment...well, kinda. **Luke 9:32-33.** Perhaps a foreshadowing of what these same men will do in the garden of Gethsemane as Jesus prays before his death, they all fall asleep. I think we can assume that they had been praying for a while, that was why they went up to the mountain in the first place. Fall asleep praying, only to wake up to the shining face of Jesus in conversation with two of their most revered patriarchs.

As Moses and Elijah begin to leave, Peter, not wanting the moment to end, offers to make a tent for each of them. Other translations use the word tabernacle in place of tent. Peter is doing the very thing we saw earlier, when the people couldn't decide if Jesus was Elijah, John the baptist resurrected, or a prophet of old like Moses. Peter offers to make a place of honor for the three, not seeing the lack of distinction he is assuming, ultimately not honoring Jesus *enough*: as the radiant and glorious Son of God, second member of the triune Godhead.

Luke 9:34-36. Perhaps in response to Peter's blunder, a cloud, fog overtakes them. The fact that they were afraid at the fog, probably means it happened quite suddenly. And in the midst of the fog, comes the booming voice of the Father. "This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!" The voice of God making abundantly clear, the distinctive God-ness of Jesus.

It can be tempting, and easy for us, to think about Jesus almost exclusively, as the meek, gentle, carpenter that sat kindly with the woman at the well, or wept at the deathbed of Lazarus. These are not inaccurate pictures of Jesus! We will see soon his care, compassion and gentleness as he heals a young boy. We just came out of a series about emotions, and dealing with suffering in our minds and

heart, where it is imperative that we see Jesus as not only one who heals, but one who empathizes with us in our weakness, as he himself was subject to weakness in his flesh.

But we must not forget, Jesus is God. The Great “I AM.” The Jesus that *was* weak, is not the Jesus that is now in glory, sitting at the right hand of the Father, interceding for us. Who will return in the same glorious, perfect, unvarnished white that shone through on that mountain.

Peter, James and John kinda missed it. They fell asleep as the initial moment of his glory shining through occurred, and as both the prophets arrived. Waking up mid conversation. They also missed it as represented by Peter. Who, after seeing the radiance of Jesus' manifest glory, still thought of him, whether intentionally or not, at the same level of the prophets. A great teacher. A wonderful Rabbi. A messenger from God. Betraying his own words, when he confesses Jesus as the Christ, only a couple verses earlier in verse 20!

If we lose the glorious God-ness of Jesus, we cannot follow him as we ought. Jesus is the sovereign, perfect, ruling judge of the universe. (Heb 1:3) In him, the Father has chosen to manifest his glory. There are many implications this has for our discipleship and following Jesus ourselves.

This means that everything Jesus said and did during his ministry on earth holds the same promissory weight of all the covenants and promises God made throughout history with his people. In other words, Jesus' promises hold true. When he told us a couple of weeks ago that the cost of following Jesus is great, that it's going to be hard, that you're going to suffer, it will be painful... and yet, that it will be worth every ounce of suffering and sacrifice made, will be worth it's weight in glory. And when he makes that same promise at the end of chapter 9. The reward offered, the satisfaction guaranteed to his people. Far more real are these promises to hold on to, when spoken with a weight of the glory of God behind them.

Even thinking about our “Talking to yourself” series. It is important that we see the caring nature of Jesus. But before that, Jesus is God. If that is the case, then how much more real does Jesus' empathy carry, when the *glorious* Jesus willingly subject himself to the frailty of those same temptations of anxiety, anger and depression. That is a hope so much more tangible. A future far more assured.

To follow Jesus rightly, we must see Jesus for who he is: our glorious reigning King. The gravity of discipleship can only make sense if who we are following is worth it. In the transfiguration, there is no mistaking, at the very core of Jesus' identity, is his glory.

Luke 9:37-43a. Here we see an event, the day following the transfiguration. Jesus and the three have rejoined the rest of the disciples, along with a crowd. And Jesus heals a young boy possessed by a demon. **2. The Compassionate Authority of Jesus.**

As a crowd presses in, a man with a son is distraught, and starts begging Jesus to heal his only son. He hurriedly describes the symptoms, and laments that even Jesus' disciples could not heal the boy and cast out the demon. And Jesus, despite the lack of faith around him, heals the boy.

Sometimes, we read scripture, and we can layer into our understanding a modern, or postmodern lense. So what we read here is really a medical issue: seizures due to epilepsy. That what the authors

of these gospels didn't understand was modern medicine. But if they had, then they would have called this epilepsy and not demon possession.

Just like the transfiguration, this event occurs in Matthew and Mark. And actually, in Matthew, the father in his crying out to Jesus, uses a word we could translate as epileptic. So there was, an understanding of the very real, medical problem of seizures and epilepsy. Further, **Matthew 4:24**. Epilepsy is distinct from the demonic.

What's happening here is not a medical issue. It is not a broken brain. Remember, Luke is a doctor. If anyone around Jesus or his disciples would make it clear that this was a medical issue, it would be the doctor among them. Luke is making the point, there is a particularly spiritual sickness here. Something at work within the boy that defies human understanding, or medical care. Something that only spiritual authority could answer. The authority of Jesus.

It's funny to me, sometimes, how Jesus heals people in the gospels. This is a great example. You have the crowds pressing in. Them just returning from this glorious event. The father laboring to describe the evil that is oppressing his son in vivid detail, the harm and suffering that his son endures, and the failure of Jesus' disciples to help. A demon possessing a young boy. This incomprehensible problem that no one could possibly have an answer for. All of this build-up, only for a sentence from Luke, not even a whole verse, half a verse, **Luke 9:42**.

The 'matter of fact' way that Jesus deals with the undealable, the incomprehensible. Proving again and again, the chasmic gulf between the most impossibly horrible situation we could think of, and Jesus' ability to answer us, heal us, and send us on our way. It's even in the simple way that Luke describes the event that points so clearly to Jesus' ultimate authority over *everything*. Even things we don't like to talk about like demons. It's an authority that actually flows, from his glory. Only the Son of God, the Chosen One, could have that kind of authority.

Authority like this is compelling. But even more compelling, is when it is coupled with the compassionate care we see so often of Jesus in the gospel accounts. Take this story. There is a reason the man went to the disciples first for help. **Luke 9:1,6**. Not only did Jesus commission his disciples to go and do the very kinds of healing, and offer the very kinds of help he himself had been doing, but they were successful to a degree.

But what was different about this man? We can see in Jesus' exclamation. **Luke 9:41**. Jesus' seeming exasperation is at the lack of faith, the lack of belief in his authority, the same authority that he gave them. But it isn't only the disciples that Jesus is lamenting, he says, "faithless and twisted generation," Meaning all of these people didn't believe that Jesus could do what he did. Healing this uniquely spiritual suffering.

When we compare this account of events, to the gospel of Mark's account, this is even clearer. **Mark 9:21-23**. The compassion of Jesus is seen not simply in healing the boy, in casting out the demon, but his acting, despite the lack of faith.

What we learn about Jesus from this event is his compassionate authority. If you read through any of the gospels, you'll see Jesus healing and helping people in need, over and over again. Jesus' word and

will changing and shifting the natural course of the world. Power over waves and wind and storms, power over demons and spiritual things we can scarcely comprehend, and power over our own fallen and weak and sick minds and bodies.

Uniquely, Jesus didn't always require faith to heal, or the casting out of demons. It's actually not often that Jesus calls people to faith before he heals them. But here, in this story coupled with what Peter, James and John witnessed, Jesus is showing his disciples what he is capable of through them as his faithful disciples. Through this man, and his son, Jesus demonstrates how he will use even a little bit of faith to do incredible things for the kingdom of God. This foreshadows the mission of God in the Christian, and the mission of God in the church.

The point is this: as disciples and disciplers we must understand the compassionate authority of Jesus, because it is faith in the compassionate and authoritative Jesus that has the power to change and shape us. In all our efforts to follow Jesus, it isn't our effort that bears fruit. It isn't our will, our hard work. In all our efforts to help others to follow Jesus, it's not winsome speech, and clever one liners that change minds and shape our obedience. The only way we change, is if through faith, God himself works that change inside of us. And we know he will, not just because he says he will (1 Thes 5), but because we know who Jesus is and what he is like. Because we know Jesus.

Discipleship will be tough and hard ground if we are reliant on ourselves and not on Jesus. If we don't see Jesus as the one who owns that authority, has dominion and rule over the things we understand and the things we don't, then it's likely our maturity will begin to flatline, and those we endeavor to help will do the same.

Luke 9:43-45. Immediately after the events with the demon possessed boy, Jesus pulls his disciples aside and delivers to them something very important. It is the second time this chapter, and the second time in the book of Luke that Jesus predicts his death to his disciples.

This is the third aspect of the identity of Jesus we are after this morning, **3. The Gospel Mission of Jesus.** The reason for the incarnate Jesus entering the earth was his mission to die a sinner's death on a cross, though he himself would never sin or earn that death. It's as if Jesus is pulling them back to reality. Back to the point and purpose of his coming in the first place. After the glorious moment on a mountain, this incredible healing that left the people in awe, he reminds them his ultimate goal: to die for the sin of mankind, and reconcile the sinner back to God.

If you were reading closely earlier in our text this morning, you will have seen a reference to this already. When Jesus was on the mountain during his transfiguration, we see Jesus referencing his death in his conversation with Moses and Elijah: **Luke 9:29-31.** It's interesting, in Jesus' most manifestly glorious moment, transfigured on that mountain top, he wants to keep pressing toward the moment of his death and suffering. It explains why in the midst of adoration, Jesus steps aside with his disciples, and warns them that it won't always be like this. That these people, these people marveling at the majesty of God in Jesus, the astonished people, will soon turn on him and demand that he be crucified and put to death.

The gospel mission of Jesus is at the center of everything we do as a church, because the gospel was at the center of everything Jesus was doing in his incarnation. That includes the moment on the top of

that mountain. That includes every moment of healing and casting out of spiritual darkness. That is why Jesus warns his disciples that the people's reverence would soon turn to rage. The mission of Jesus incarnate was his death and resurrection.

As a church, we use the phrase 'gospel centered' so much. All of our sermons and teaching and discipleship, must at their core be tied to the gospel of Jesus. The gospel is: Jesus doing everything required to restore broken sinners back to God. Which was dying on a cross, raising from death to life, ascending bodily to the right hand of the Father, and imparting us with the Holy Spirit to live faithfully with all the authority and compassion Jesus did.

In order to follow Jesus rightly, the gospel must be the source and end of everything we aim to do. Two practical applications from the mission of Jesus. Being a disciple of Jesus means holding tightly to the gospel in these two ways. The gospel as our beginning and the gospel as our end.

1. Gospel as our beginning. In many ways the gospel is our beginning. It is the gospel of Jesus that saves us from our sin and unbelief. Eph 2:2 "Even when we were dead in our trespasses, God made us alive together with Christ, by grace you have been saved."

If you are a Christian in here, you were saved by the choosing grace of God. You were dead. Dead people aren't known for their great acts of heroism and clarity. Yet in our dead souls, we were brought back into relationship with the God of the universe by the atoning work of Jesus. Propitiating for our sin, taking the wrath that our rebellion deserved. If we lose the gospel, we lose that which saved us. That which brought us to life.

Beyond our salvation and conversion, the gospel is the beginning of our goodness. How do we know what compassion looks like? Because compassion was perfected in Jesus dying for us. Paying for our sin that we might suffer in it no longer. How do we know what humility is? Philippians 2: Because humility was perfected as Jesus entered flesh and chose to take on this mission despite the perfect, glorious, satisfying place he already had a hold of in his divinity. How do we know what love is? 1 John 4:10, Because he [Father] loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

All efforts to these ideals are downstream of our understanding of what Jesus did in the gospel. If we lose the gospel, then we lose the perfect ideal to aspire to, we lose our tether and anchor. Any other ideal, or standard of goodness, would begin with us, humanity, fallen, finite creatures. Maybe we start to define for ourselves what love is. What kindness is. What mercy and compassion look like. Maybe my definition begins to look different than yours. And before you know it, we start defining love by our political affiliations, or our activism, or how much money we give, or how loud we are on social media on behalf of the cause we care about. All of our goodness, any act of kindness, compassion, mercy, love, it's all better when done as a representation of what God through Jesus did in the gospel. Any other source of goodness is a cheap knockoff.

The gospel is also the beginning of our discipleship, our helping others to follow Jesus. It was Jesus who called twelve men to himself, who he would impart authority to, who he would give the responsibility of continuing his ministry to. Part of Jesus' mission in the gospel was to not leave without preparing others to carry on the ministry of mercy in the gospel, and the message of salvation in the gospel. Helping others follow Jesus, means helping others begin with the gospel.

Losing the gospel in our discipleship means losing discipleship. To be redundant, if we are following Jesus, then what's important to Jesus must be important to us. If we are emphasizing something other than what Jesus emphasized, are we really following Jesus anymore? Are we helping others follow Jesus?

2. Gospel as our goal. Just like the gospel is the beginning of our life with Christ at conversion, the gospel should be our aim at the end. The result of the gospel is being reconciled back to God. "Jesus did everything required to *reconcile broken sinners back to God.*" As Adam and Eve walked with the Lord in the garden, in heaven we will also walk with him. What could we possibly look forward to that is greater than that? What could we possibly be looking forward to if we lose the gospel?!

The gospel is also the end of our goodness. We aren't good for goodness sake. Jesus isn't Santa Claus. Our goodness should ultimately point toward the gospel of Jesus. All the ways we are loving, kind, mercifully, generous or humble shouldn't lead to praise for us or our efforts, rather they should be clear waypoints on the path to gospel proclamation. If we don't end with the gospel in our doing good, then doing good becomes an exercise in moralistic, vain, self-satisfaction.

And in our discipleship, the gospel is the end. We, and those we disciple should live in holiness and goodness because of the gospel as well so that the gospel might be proclaimed in our lives. And if we lose the gospel as our goal in discipleship, it ceases to be "follow me as I follow Jesus," and simply becomes, "follow me." All in all, it is the gospel that is pushing and pulling us towards becoming more like Jesus.

Do you see Jesus clearly? Is there an aspect of Jesus' identity that you have neglected, or altogether ignored? If we want to call ourselves Christians, and claim to follow Jesus as his people, then we must see him as he is. Let us not neglect the reality of our savior, but press to know him more and more. And in anything we do, may Sovereign Hope be marked by carrying on the mission of Jesus, the gospel of salvation and glory.