

I. Introduction

Good morning! The Scriptures tell us that we become more like Jesus as we follow Him. For example, in **Luke 6:40**, Jesus says, **“A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.”** We can see this in a school classroom, and we can see it in the relationship between Jesus and His disciples.



From the time when Jesus said, “Follow me,” Jesus was training His disciples to carry on the gospel work. Of course, most of the training was not done sitting in a classroom; it was largely done through inviting the disciples to watch as Jesus did the ministry. But in today’s Scripture, we will see the disciples move from watching to doing. There is a big difference between watching and doing! But the Lord Jesus decided it was time for the disciples to go out and do some ministry themselves. Many people in many places needed to hear the Good News of the Kingdom of God, so Jesus sent out the twelve to preach and teach in His Name. Let’s read Luke 9:1-17 together.

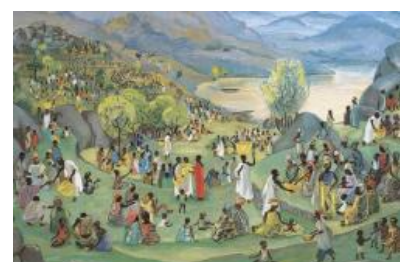


II. Scripture Luke 9:1-17 (NIV)

[1] When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, [2] and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. [3] He told them: "Take nothing for the journey--no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra tunic. [4] Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. [5] If people do not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave their town, as a testimony against them." [6] So they set out and went from village to village, preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere. [7] Now Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was going on. And he was perplexed, because some were saying that John had been raised from the dead, [8] others that Elijah had appeared, and still others that one of the prophets of long ago had come back to life. [9] But Herod said, "I beheaded John. Who, then, is this I hear such things about?" And he tried to see him. [10] When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done. Then he took them with him and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida, [11] but the crowds learned about it and followed him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing. [12] Late in the afternoon the Twelve came to him and said, "Send the crowd away so they can go to the surrounding villages and countryside and find food and lodging, because we are in a remote place here." [13] He replied, "You give them something to eat." They answered, "We have only five loaves of bread and two fish--unless we go and buy food for all this crowd." [14] (About five thousand men were there.) But he said to his disciples, "Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each." [15] The disciples did so, and everybody sat down. [16] Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke them. Then he gave them to the disciples to set before the people. [17] They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

III. Teaching

About 5,000 men, plus an unknown number of women and children, had followed Jesus and the disciples out to a remote place. Late in the day, the disciples urged Jesus to send the people away so that they could go and find food. But Jesus had other plans. **Luke 9:16**, **“Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke them. Then he gave them to the disciples**



to set before the people.” Jesus broke five loaves of bread and then gave it to the disciples to set before more than 5,000 people. Only through an amazing miracle of multiplication of the loaves and the fishes is it possible to feed the huge crowd.

But there is something else here also. In taking the bread in His hands and giving the blessing, Jesus is taking on the role of the head of the household. Here we have an announcement of Jesus’ authority over the people of Israel, an announcement that is accompanied by a demonstration of His ability to provide for their needs.



We are reminded of Moses in the wilderness, at the time when Moses announced to Israel that God would provide manna from heaven to feed the vast crowds of Israel. The Israelites were hungry and they complained, but the Lord spoke to Moses in **Exodus 16:4**, **“Then the Lord said to Moses, “I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions.”** Moses announced this to the people of Israel, and from that day forward, until they crossed the Jordan River and entered the Promised Land, the Lord provided manna from heaven to feed the people.

It is not a coincidence that Jesus, like Moses, is using miracle bread to feed the people. It is a demonstration that Jesus is the One whom Moses spoke of in **Deuteronomy 18:15**. **“The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.”** It is easy for us to miss this, but the crowd that ate the bread did not miss it. Concerning this same miracle, in **John 6:14**, it is recorded that, **“After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, ‘Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.’”**

The people who were there saw the miracle and recognized that Jesus is the Prophet Moses spoke of, but Jesus is also far more than a Prophet. Jesus is not only able to provide bread to sustain our bodies, He, Himself, is the bread from heaven that sustains our souls. In **John 6:35**, we read, **“Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.”** Only in Jesus do we have spiritual bread that provides eternal sustenance for our souls. In Jesus, we have eternal peace and eternal joy.

The feeding of the 5,000 occurs right after the twelve had returned from their mission. I think they were tired and wanted some rest. But when they tried to withdraw by themselves to a quiet place, thousands of people heard where they were and showed up asking for help. If I had been there, I might have said, *“Hey, wait a minute, we are on break right now, come back later.”* But Jesus welcomed the people and met their needs. This is a lesson for all of us. We need to be ready to love people and minister to them whenever and wherever. We need to be ready to set aside our plans and walk in what the Lord has planned for us.

Let’s return to the opening verses of today’s Scripture. **Luke 9:1-2**, **“When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.”** As I was saying earlier, Jesus had been training His disciples for some time, and now He is giving them a chance to do some practical application. But, before sending them out, Jesus gave them what they needed to do the work - power and authority over demons and disease. Jesus called the twelve, trained them, equipped them, and then sent them out to preach. And He also gave them power to do miracles that would prove that they were messengers from God.

Does this mean that all Christians should be able to do miracles when they go out to preach the Gospel? No, it does not. God gives us what we need, but for many missions, other gifts may be more necessary. Here in Japan, the Christian who is equipped with the love of Christ and with deep patience and unending perseverance may be more effective than a miracle worker. The lesson here is that the Lord equips us with what we need to do the work He calls us to. Whatever the Lord calls you to do, you can be confident that He will provide what you need to accomplish His will. The Lord does not give everyone the same gifts, but He does give each of us what we need for our mission in life.

Luke 9:3, "He told them: "Take nothing for the journey--no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra tunic." This is a test of the disciples' faith. They are going out with nothing, trusting that the Lord will provide what they need along the way. And the Lord did provide every necessary thing. At the feeding of the 5,000, the Lord provided through a spectacular miracle. But when the disciples were sent out, it seems that the Lord had a plan to provide food and shelter through a more common means, through everyday hospitality. **Luke 9:4-5, "Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. If people do not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave their town, as a testimony against them."**

When are the apostles supposed to shake the dust off their feet and leave? When the people of the town do not welcome them. If the people did not show hospitality or even listen to what the apostles have to say, then it was best to leave. This verse is not about whether people believed in Jesus or not when they first heard the message; it is about whether the people are kind to strangers. If the people of a town did not welcome the apostles, then they were to shake the dust off their feet as a testimony against that place.

This was not a new idea; it was what Jewish teachers did when they returned from a foreign land. Israel was viewed as the holy land, so they did not want to track any dust from foreign lands into Israel. If the apostles were seen doing this leaving a Jewish town, it would be understood as a dire warning against that town. And perhaps, the warning might be heeded and the people might have a change of heart and repent.



Some towns may have refused hospitality, but in most places the apostles and their ministry were welcomed. **Luke 9:6** tells us, **"So they set out and went from village to village, preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere."** The twelve apostles were sent out and they boldly preached the gospel. We, all of us, share the same mission of preaching the gospel, because the Great Commission is for all Christians. **Matthew 28:18-20, "Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."**

We can boldly share the love of Jesus and preach the Good News of salvation through faith in His finished work on the cross. We do not need to be afraid, because He is with us always. We do not need to be embarrassed either. As Paul said in **Romans 1:16, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile."**

Someone may say, *"I tried to share the gospel and was rejected."* Well, the apostles were also rejected in some towns, but they went on to other towns and continued the work. Someone else may say, *"I want to share Jesus, but I have messed up my own life, so I cannot witness to others."* But we do not preach Jesus because of our success, we preach Jesus because of who He is. Even if we have had some troubles in our own lives, we can claim **Philippians 3:13-14** as our own. **"Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."**

When the twelve were sent out, they were not yet ready to go to the nations, but that was okay because God planned to proclaim the Good News first to the Jews and then to the nations. **Matthew 10:5-6** tells us, **"These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: 'Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel.'" Jesus ministered to all people from the beginning of His ministry. But the twelve were not ready for that yet. They were ready to be sent out, but only to their own people, people of the same culture and language. Later, they would be to bring the Good News to the nations. But not yet, for their own training, and also for the fulfillment of the prophecies, they needed to begin by preaching to the people of Israel, their own Jewish brothers and sisters.**

IV. Conclusion

All of us are called to share the love of Jesus with others, and for many of us, the best place to begin is close to home, in our own family, in our own neighborhood, school, and workplace. As we grow in faith and

experience, the Lord may send us out further, even into other lands. But we can begin right where we are. We can begin by sharing the Good News of Jesus with the people we already know and with the people we meet day by day on the train and around the town. If we watch and are ready, we will see that there are many opportunities to tell people about Jesus.

As we prepare to close, let's take a look at **Matthew 9:35-38**. **“Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”** The work was progressing, but more workers were needed. So, Jesus told the disciples to pray for more workers.

A short time after Jesus said these things, He sent the twelve out as workers in the harvest field. What can we learn from this? We learn that when we pray, we should be ready to be part of the answer to the prayer. Are you praying for someone to come and witness to your family, your neighbor, or your boss? That is a good thing; don't stop praying. But also don't be surprised if the Lord calls you to be the one to take the gospel to them.



V. Closing Prayer