



St. Paul Lutheran Church

“Your Refuge from the Storm”

LifeGroup Study

March 4, 2024

Luke 9:1-6

Community

TODAY’S THEME

Jesus gives power and authority to his followers to teach and heal. This call is our call, as well, as we grow in Christ who is the true vine. It is the vine that nourishes us.

WHAT DO WE WANT OUR SMALL GROUP TO KNOW?

So often we focus the gospel message on what we’ve been saved *from* (sin and death), but we fail to proclaim what we have been saved *for*: a life that proclaims the good news in word and deed. Our consumerism needs to be challenged and transformed into a blessed life of mission for the sake of the gospel.

We are people who have been saved by grace through faith, named and claimed in the waters of baptism, nurtured on the Word of God, fed through the bread and wine of the table, and all of this for a reason: so that we might be sent out into the world on mission.

WHAT DO WE WANT OUR SMALL GROUP TO DO?

Take the next step in the journey of faith. See “application.”

INTRODUCTION

Unfortunately, many in the church assume that Jesus has given the mission over to pastors and church staff, not to them. That myth needs to be dispelled! Like the disciples, each one of us has been called, commissioned, equipped, empowered and authorized.

ICEBREAKER

Talk about a time when you felt completely unprepared and unequipped to do a job you were asked to do. Do you feel called, commissioned, equipped, empowered and authorized when it comes to proclaiming the gospel and working for healing in our world? What do you think your next step might be toward each of these?

PRAY TOGETHER

God, you challenge us to engage in your mission for the world. You have called, commissioned, equipped, empowered and authorized each of us for this spiritual journey. This mission is to heal and teach, to proclaim the gospel and bring comfort and healing to the broken places in our world and in our lives. Step by step, guide our pathway and be close to us as we grow in you. Amen.

Content

(*Read Luke 9:1-6.*) The twelve disciples were ordinary men, carefully chosen after much prayer (Luke 6:12-15). They were not spiritual superstars; they were spiritual misfits, the lower echelon of

culture, the ordinary of the ordinary. The gospel writers go to great lengths to remind us that Jesus did not call those who were most qualified so that we might see ourselves in the story.

First, Jesus modeled ministry for them, preaching, teaching, healing, and exorcising demons before their eyes. Now Jesus called them together and imbued them with power and authority to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.

(Note: Power, “dynamis” in Greek, is the root from which we get our word “dynamite.” This is spiritual power to accomplish the extraordinary, the supernatural. Authority, “exousia” in Greek, refers to license or permission to do something. The disciples were given both power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases.)

Notice that the proclamation comes first. To proclaim the kingdom of God is to announce that God’s reign is at hand. The miracles were intended to back up the reality of the message that was being proclaimed. They were never meant to be the focus.

When Jesus began his preaching (Luke 4:18-19), he cast the message in the words of Isaiah 61: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

Isaiah was describing the Israelites’ release from Babylonian captivity, and likening it to the Year of Jubilee in which all debts were canceled, all slaves set free and all land returned to its original owners. By using these words from Isaiah, Jesus described the kingdom of God as the righteous reign of grace and redemptive love that would set free a people captive not only by sin and death, but by any oppression. The proclamation of the kingdom of God is a word of hope for the hopeless, and a word of warning to those who stand against God’s movement to redeem and reconcile.

Before Jesus sent these unlikely preachers and healers out into the community, he gave them instructions. First, he told the disciples to “take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money, not even an extra tunic.” These instructions served two purposes. They let the disciples know that this missionary journey would be brief. More importantly, they let the disciples know they could depend on the generous provision of God along the way.

(Note: A staff would have been used for protection and walking; a bag for extra supplies; bread to ensure they had food; money for both food and shelter; and an extra tunic for warmth when sleeping outside). Jesus assured the disciples that they would find hospitality, but they would also face rejection and opposition. “Wherever they do not welcome you, as you are leaving that town, shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.” Shaking the dust of unaccepting towns from their feet had deep cultural implications. It showed extreme contempt for an area and its people, as well as the determination not to have any further involvement with them. Pious Jews would do this after passing through Gentile cities to show separation from Gentile practices. If the disciples shook the dust of a Jewish town from their feet, it would show their separation from Jews who rejected their Messiah. It also showed that the disciples were not responsible for how people responded to their message.

Their job was to proclaim, and let the Spirit do the rest.

And how did the disciples respond to Jesus’ call? They could have gone back to fishing and tax-collecting. Who could blame them?

Instead, “they departed and went through the villages, bringing the good news and curing diseases

everywhere.”

DISCUSSION

Why did Jesus tell them to take nothing with them: no staff, bag, bread, money or extra tunic? Talk about the idea of “shaking the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.” What does that mean in modern-day language? The disciples were given power and authority to do what? Do you think they felt called, commissioned, equipped, empowered and authorized? Why or why not?

GOING DEEPER

Read this song called *Step By Step*:

Oh God, you are my God, and I will ever praise you.

I will seek you in the morning and I will learn to walk in your ways. And step by step you'll lead me, and I will follow you all of my days.

FOUR STEPS OF A DISCIPLE

Step one. Every disciple is a hand-crafted masterpiece, made by God for the purpose of doing God's work. Even before these disciples were born, God knew them and designed them for his purposes. Did the disciples know that? We don't know. What we do know is that they lived very ordinary lives, learning their fathers' trades and going about daily life, just like everyone else, until that day when Jesus called them: “Come, follow me.”

DISCUSSION How have you responded to God's call to come and follow? What's your next step?

Step two. Every Jewish male knew exactly what the words “come, follow me” meant. When a rabbi selected a student, those were exactly the words he used, and this invitation was an honor. Rabbis only chose the best and the brightest. But that's what's so interesting about Jesus' invitation to these men. They weren't the best and the brightest. They were common laborers. The best and the brightest had been chosen when they were young boys. And yet Jesus chose these common, ordinary men. They were being called to leave their old lives behind and to literally follow the rabbi, to sit at his feet and learn and watch what he did. Every good disciple knew that the goal of following a rabbi was to learn what the rabbi knew, and to eventually do what the rabbi did.

DISCUSSION To us, as modern-day Christians, what does it mean to want to learn what the rabbi knows and do what the rabbi does? What's your next step?

Step three. The day came when Jesus turned to his followers and said, “your turn. It's time for you to go out and do what I've been doing.” After what they had seen Jesus do, they had probably given up on the notion that they were supposed to do what their rabbi did. They were just ordinary men, and Jesus was unlike anyone they had ever met. But Jesus didn't send them out unequipped. Not only had he been teaching them and modeling exactly what he wanted them to do, but in our scripture reading today he gave them two important things: power and authority. His power and authority.

DISCUSSION How is Christ's power and authority put to use in your life? How could it be used better? What's your next step?

Step four. So they went. They took a step of faith. They went out proclaiming the good news of God's kingdom and healing the sick. And the world has never been the same. Did these ordinary men think they had all they needed? Did they feel as if they were ready? Probably not, but being a disciple

isn't about knowing more, it's about trusting more in the One who sends us out.

DISCUSSION Do you think you'll ever feel ready, equipped, or knowledgeable enough for your ministry? What's your next step?

Application

Take the next step. You're new to the journey and just learning that there is a God who created you, loves you and has a plan for your life. Let's talk about baptism. Take the next step.

You've been baptized, but that's about as far as the journey has gone. You're a member of the church and you come for your religious goods and services, but you're beginning to sense that there's so much more to this journey. Take the next step into growing.

You've been learning and growing, and you sense Jesus calling you to make new disciples, but you don't feel like you know enough. Take the next step and learn how to plant seeds of faith in others.

If you're already out in the field, already about the task of making new disciples, you already know the joy of being blessed to be a blessing to others. Now who can you come alongside so that they, too, might know that joy? Take the next step into bearing fruit.

PRAY TOGETHER

God, walk with us through this spiritual journey of life. Be close to us and guide every step of this pilgrim journey. In our trials, be near to us. In our troubles, comfort us and bring peace. We often wander away down paths of our own choosing, and have taken steps that lead us far away from you. We may not even know what our next spiritual step might be. By the power of your Holy Spirit, guide us and lead us in the coming week as we seek to take our next step. Amen.

LifeGroup readings for March 3, 2023

Luke 9:1-6 NLT One day Jesus called together his twelve disciples and gave them power and authority to cast out all demons and to heal all diseases. (2) Then he sent them out to tell everyone about the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick. (3) "Take nothing for your journey," he instructed them. "Don't take a walking stick, a traveler's bag, food, money, or even a change of clothes. (4) Wherever you go, stay in the same house until you leave town. (5) And if a town refuses to welcome you, shake its dust from your feet as you leave to show that you have abandoned those people to their fate." (6) So they began their circuit of the villages, preaching the Good News and healing the sick.