

Title: Setting the mark, keeping the pace  
Text: Luke 9.1-9  
Theme: Christ shares his life with us.  
Series: Luke  
Prop Stmtnt: We share in his authority that we may share in his suffering, that we may share in his glory.

There have been and continue to be a number of songs written about how meaningless life is. But if life is so meaningless, why write a song about? Writing, arranging, recording and producing music is work. Why do so much work when, if you really believe what you are singing, then all of your effort is actually meaningless? The truth is, we know intuitively, we know instinctively, we know at the heart and gut level that life is not meaningless. When it feels meaningless, we get depressed. If it really was meaningless, then there is nothing to get depressed about because there is nothing and nothing matters and we wouldn't care. But we know that our lives matter. What we don't know, or in many cases, don't want to know is just how much it matters.

The plan and vision of God for your life is so much bigger, joyful and deliriously satisfying than many of you grasp. Your limited vision of God produces an abbreviated vision and plan and leaves you with a truncated view of your life. Many of you really do not grasp what God has designed you for. I aim to broaden your vision of God and his plan, so that grasping a greater view of God, your heart will be fueled with a greater love and fire for God. This, I pray will result in a greater enjoyment of your God-given, God-focused life both now and forever. Our text is a piece of that amazing puzzle. The first two points of the sermon come from what we have studied and what we will study. This will help you understand how the event we are looking at this morning fits into the little picture and the big picture. We will read our text after the first two points: First....

### **1. The Context of Luke 8-9**

Chapter 8 was intense. Jesus talked about the critical importance of hearing and believing his word from the heart and then did a series of miracles to prove this is no game. His power over nature, demons, disease, and even over death is all you need to know to believe whatever he says because he has the authority to back it up. Put all of this together and the point is clear.

#### **a. Jesus is worth believing no matter what. (8)**

Now, Jesus shares that power and authority with his disciples and sends them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. This is a fascinating turn of events. But there's more to this. This event is obviously connected to what happened before and is intentional to what happens after. The rest of the events in chapter 9 begin to intensify the cost of discipleship because...

#### **b. Following Jesus is a serious call (9).**

This is no game. Jesus does not need crowds, fans, or Facebook friends. He wants followers who are all in, no matter what. He already established that he is worth being all in for. But you need to know that there is a price to pay for following Jesus. This world is no friend of grace. So, the theme of Luke 9 is explaining the serious nature of the call to follow Jesus and is asking the question – are you in? In order for you to come to answer the question of – are you in? You need to know what you are signing up for. That brings us to the theme of Luke 9, our 2<sup>nd</sup> point.

## 2. Theme of Luke 9 – Who is Jesus and what does it mean to follow him?

Herod asks the question in v.9. *“Who is this about whom I hear such things?”* Then Jesus asks the question in v.18, *“Who do the crowds say that I am?”* Then Jesus follows up that question with another question in v.20. *“But who do you say that I am?”* Peter answers that question correctly in v.20, but later in v.35, God, the Father answers it even better when says, *“This is my Son, my Chosen One.”* Peter says that Jesus is the Messiah of God, and God the Father says that Jesus is God (my Son), the Messiah. Wow! So, who is Jesus? He is God and He is the Messiah. He is the KING!! Therefore, the only right, intelligent and reasonable thing to do is to follow him. But if you follow him, you need to be prepared for what you are going to face. This world is in rebellion to God. The kingdoms of this world hate the kingdom of God. We have no army or military. We have no land. We have no currency. We don’t even have a soccer team. And yet the world hates the kingdom of God. You need to know that because if you follow Jesus, you will be walking uphill and against the wind.

Read Text:

## 3. Following Jesus means to participate in his mission. (1-9)

Jesus sets the mark and now his followers, (we) keep the pace. The last half of chapter 8 demonstrates the power of Christ, and now we see what Christ does with that power. He shares it with his followers. Here is a picture of the life of a genuine Christian. We run the race that he ran. There is also a sense in which as we run the race, he runs it with us. We never run alone. In this text, Jesus is preparing the disciples for what is ahead. He is giving them a taste of what is going to happen. They are going to face ridicule, rejection and some reception. Therefore, this mission that he sends them on has three aspects. This mission has focus for now, later and forever. Jesus sends his disciples out with power to preach and to experience acceptance and rejection. By publicly identifying themselves as followers of Christ, the 12 will have a taste of what Jesus speaks of in the days to come. (v.21, 23-26, 44, 48, 57, 62)

God called Abraham to follow him, but he did not tell Abraham about every difficulty that he would face. The same thing was true with Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel and the rest of the prophets. God grows us as we follow him. He grows our trust to remain faithful in the midst of adversity, which itself preaches a sermon that God is our highest treasure and greatest joy. God is our goal. We now see how Christ is doing this same work of training and preparation with his disciples. They are getting a preview of what they are going to face later on, even while they are accomplishing a legitimate mission. This text reminds me of a

driver's education course. The instructor tells you what you are going to do, reviews the laws of the road with you, and then he/she takes you out and you get in the car. Before you get onto 696, you drive around the parking lot. Then you get on some side streets. Then you get on some surface streets. Later on, you hit 696. This event is like the disciples driving in the parking lot. In other words, this mission is a preview of what is to come later, which will be a preview of what we will enjoy forever! Let's go through the text and then put it all together.

#### **A. Jesus shares his power.**

Isn't this beautiful? Jesus shares his power with his disciples. Jesus is not stingy with his power, nor threatened that his disciples are going to get some positive attention. Do you remember how threatened Saul was when David got some positive attention? Saul went bezerk and tried to kill him numerous times! Jesus calls these men to follow him not to be minions that he will use, abuse and then discard when they are no longer useful. Oh no, he calls us as family, as friends, as teammates. He has the power, we don't, but he shares it with us that we may really be part of what he is doing. This happens here. This will happen again in John 20.22 and Acts 2. Christ gives his disciples the Holy Spirit so they, for a time could do what Jesus did.

What kind of a leader is this, who invites his followers to enjoy the benefits that he has and receive good affirming attention from others? How many of you have worked for an insecure boss or manager? It is suffocating. If they make a mistake, life is awful. If you make a mistake, life is awful. If you do too well, life is awful. You don't want to marry an insecure person and you certainly don't want to spend eternity with an insecure God. God is so satisfied with himself as God, and is so delighted in his relationship as God, he created you that his enjoyment might be enjoyed by even more. Jesus shares his power with disciples because he loves them and wants them to know that he trusts them so they will trust him even more. There's more. He sends them out on a mission.

#### **B. Jesus shares the mission. (2)**

Jesus shares the mission so that the mission will expand. Jesus is not hiring minions to do the jobs he doesn't want to do. He has clearly set the example on doing mission. But, look at the benefit of this. Up until this point, most of the time you had to go to where Jesus was. He was only in one place at a time. Yes, he traveled to various villages and towns, but now, Jesus is sending his disciples out so that multiple villages and towns could hear the message about the kingdom of God. This way, more people could hear about Jesus and see evidence of his power.

The power to heal and cast out demons was given to them so the message about the Kingdom of God they proclaimed would be authenticated. I'm going to come back to this in the conclusion. But the message that they proclaimed about the Kingdom of God is what the entire Bible and this entire creation is about. This is the end game and this text illustrates that on several different levels. The disciples did not do miracles in order to wow people, but to woo people to trust Christ. At the same time, they had to trust Christ. Jesus did not give them enough food, water and money to cover their expenses for this mission. They were ordered to

take no staff, no backpack, no bread, no money and not even an extra tunic (a long garment worn next to the skin). Our youngest daughter is in the army and is a professional backpacker amongst many other things. When we go hiking with her, there is a list of things that she expects us to take and it is almost everything that Jesus says not to take, except for bear spray. You never know what is going to happen, so you need layers of clothes, food, water, walking sticks, sunscreen, bug spray, etc. You never know what is going to happen. That is the point here. These disciples were to experience this mission as being a mission for the people AND an opportunity for them to depend on Christ to meet their needs every step of the way. This is what following Jesus is about. We trust in him every step of the way even as he empowers us to do what we are called. This does not mean that we don't take suitcases and backpacks on mission trips. It means we trust Jesus every step of the way to provide what he has promised.

### C. **Jesus shares the joy.** (1-4)

First of all, there was the joy of rescue. These guys were given power to heal and cast out demons. The accounts of Jesus healing were not colds or minor ailments, but life threatening or life debilitating conditions. Demon possession is terrifying. Can you imagine being part of the means of rescue? Some of you are drawn to the medical profession, law enforcement or fire safety because you want to make a difference and help rescue people. It is so gratifying to be on your way home at the end of your shift and realizing that on this day, you made a difference. You helped save or change a life. Jesus shares this privilege with his disciples. They are going to get a taste of the incredible joy that comes from being part of an eternal rescue.

Now you can see why Christ has entrusted us with the privilege of sharing the gospel. The message is able to go out through all of us, to many different people in many different places, but we all get to share in the joy of people being part of the team and the process that rescues by the gospel. Sharing the gospel is a team sport. And God uses his church as part of that process. Every Sunday there are people who come here who need Jesus. Every Sunday. Some of them aren't even sure why they are here, but they just felt like they needed to be. You may be the person who welcomes them for the first time and gives them a taste of what this family is about. In that moment they know that at least to you, they matter. You noticed them and you cared enough to greet them and not ignore them. I have heard so many stories from you on both sides of that experience. When that guest hears the gospel and at some point, understands it and trusts Christ and wants to join the family by professing faith in Christ, your joy is greater than most because you were on the front line of carrying water to them. That is missions. It is sharing in the joy of our Shepherd who is using us to go after his sheep.

There is also the joy of fellowship. Look at v.4. One of the greatest gifts that you could ever have is genuine brothers and sisters in Christ who love you and you love, who serve you and you serve them, who walk through deep waters with you and you with them, who rejoice in your joys and you in theirs. I have been with believers all over this world. Being in the homes of faithful believers, eating together, sharing stories of God's faithfulness, praying for one another, is priceless! But not all want to hear about Jesus. So, Jesus shares the joy but...

#### **D. Jesus shares the challenges. (5)**

This is heavy, but part of it. There are many who reject Christ and the message of his kingdom. They will not receive you as a messenger of Christ. What Jesus says in v.5 is extremely sobering. The rejection is real and so is the judgment. The disciples were told that part of their mission was to pronounce judgment on a village that refused the message of Christ. They needed to be warned. This was not a temper tantrum because feelings were hurt and egos bruised. I don't want the dust of your village on my shoes, because God will not have anything to do with those who reject his Son and his message. This is no game. They need to hear the message about Christ and part of the message includes a warning. Every doctor wants to share good news with patients, but good doctors have to be willing to share the tough news as well. The same thing, even more so, is true about a church. We have to be faithful in declaring the good news for those who come to faith in Christ, but we have to be faithful in warning those who do not. Jesus did. He set the mark; we keep the pace.

#### **E. The mission is a threat to world powers. (7-9)**

Herod the great was the non-Jewish king of Israel when Christ was born and tried to kill him. That Herod died and had 3 sons who divided up his kingdom and reigned over their respective territories, under the oversight of Rome. Herod the tetrarch was one of those sons. He was the king who got his brother's wife to divorce her husband (his brother) so she could marry him. John the Baptist said it was wrong. Immorality makes one unfit to lead. So, Herod arrested him and at the request of his wife and step-daughter executed John the Baptist. That was that, right? But what was this? Herod was getting these messages that there was preaching and miracles being performed around his kingdom. Some thought that John the Baptist had been raised from the dead. That would be a terrifying thought to someone like him. Others thought it was Elijah (which means he would have raised from the dead too). Elijah was well known to call out the immorality of the king in his day. So, while Herod is curious, he only seeks to see him. If Herod, really wanted to find Jesus, he could find Jesus. But Herod only wants to be entertained by Jesus, he doesn't really want to face Jesus because he doesn't want to face the truth about himself. That is why Jesus is a threat to every earthly kingdom. He exposes the truth.

#### **F. No one can stop the mission.**

The mission was set in motion from before time began and it is the story line that binds all other stories together. This text is a piece of the puzzle of God's plan for this world and it helps you understand God's plan for you and how you can embrace it and lean into it.

The mission or the plan of God has been to create a kingdom for Jesus to reign over. Jesus is so good and so glorious that he is worth having a people who reflect him and enjoy him so that there is just more goodness and more glory to be enjoyed. God created the world to be the Kingdom of God (same thing as the Kingdom of Christ). Because God is love, meaning God is a giving, generously sharing God, he made us to be heirs of this kingdom. We inherit the kingdom. We reign with Christ. God's plan for us to be rulers who rule under his authority. This was set

into motion when God called Adam and Eve to rule and subdue the garden and even to spread it's borders. They were God's stewards. They were given power and authority to rule over creation. That is why Adam named the animals. Of course, if you are going to rule well over what God gives you, you have to do that under his rule. That was the story for Israel. God raised them up to be a people over whom he would rule. If they would have lived under his reign, he would have drawn all the nations to them, not for them to enslave them, but for them to attract them to God! But Israel failed to rule themselves. They failed to stay under God's rule, so instead of ruling the nations, they ended up being ruled by the nations. This was happening when Christ came to the earth. Israel was ruled by Rome. The Jews wanted Jesus to break the Roman yoke. But the yoke was in place because the Jews failed to live under God's authority. In fact, they crucified their true King. What they meant for evil, God overruled for good and used the rejection of Christ as the means by which the price for our sins was paid in full by Christ when he died on the cross. He did what Adam failed to do. Jesus lived perfectly under the reign of his Father. He did perfectly what Israel failed to do. He lived perfectly under the reign of his Father. That is why he inherits it all. God has raised up the church. He has called you as a follower of Christ to live right now, under his reign so that you will be ready to rule with him.

This is the heart of living with self-control. Self-control is simply living consistently under the reign of Christ. If you can't rule yourself, you are unfit to rule others. Do you realize that when you come to faith in Christ, you not only become part of his family, his body, his church, but you become part of his government? You become part of his kingdom. You are being prepared to reign as a son and daughter of the KING! Your life is to display the glory of the King. Like the disciples, God gives you power and authority when he gave you the Holy Spirit. The Spirit helps you rule your domain (your life) and your family by giving of yourself for their good and sharing yourself to help them learn to be good rulers. He shares his authority with us, that we might share it with others. We have missionaries with us today. What is their mission? It is exactly the same as yours! We are spread the borders of the kingdom of Jesus Christ in the lives of people by proclaiming and sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ and by living faithfully under his reign. God uses this to make his gospel understood and displayed through our lives as a church, so that the people around us and around the world have a preview of what the meaning and purpose and culmination of life is really all about.

Are you in? Are you all in?