

## The Model of Missionary Mercy, Part 1

Luke 9:51

June 2, 2019

The theme of mercy, compassion, all those are connected to the attribute of God called the attribute of goodness, the goodness of God. An extension of the goodness of God is the love of God, that attribute of God, and flowing out of the goodness and love of God is God's mercy, his grace, and forbearance, and patience, mercy being that attribute of God that is demonstrated toward those in desperate, desperate need. And that's what we're talking about this morning in Luke chapter 9. So if you have your Bibles, you can turn to Luke's Gospel and find your way to Luke 9:51. We'll begin by reading Luke 9:51-56, that's our, our text.

"When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him. But the people did not receive him,

because his face was set toward Jerusalem. When his disciples, James and John, saw it they said, 'Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?' But he turned and rebuked them and they went on to another village."

Having read that text, we have crossed over, you might say, a bit of a line in Luke's Gospel, crossed over from one section to another. We're leaving the first major section of Luke's Gospel, I mentioned that the previous week when we taught on this. The first section is Luke 4:14-9:50, and that covers Jesus' Galilean ministry. We're moving in to the section major section, which is Luke 9:51 to 19:44 or so. There is some debated about the end point of that second section, we're not going to worry too much about those debates. But that next uh, we're into that next section, the second major section.

And as we join Jesus on his journey to Jerusalem, he is looking ahead, has his eyes set on what will happen in Jerusalem. That is, the rejection by the elders and chief priests and scribes, which he predicted back in verse 22 of this same chapter, followed by his death by crucifixion, but that is

not the end that he has in view, just the rejection and his death by crucifixion.

He looked beyond his atoning work to the triumph of his resurrection, followed by his ascension into heaven, his joyful return to the father, to sit down at the father's right hand. All that is going to take place when Jesus reaches Jerusalem, that final destination, his rejection, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. And these events, all those events, involve some incredibly profound and significant themes in Scripture.

This is the fulfillment, all that Jesus has his eyes set on in the future, this is the fulfillment of an eternal decree. A decree that was made before time began, before there was ever a heaven and an earth; before there was anything material, before anything existed in time and space, when there was nothing but God. This decree that was made, this decree, what he has his eyes set on.

What he's accomplishing in his death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, will fulfill God's eternal plan of redemption, will seal the destiny of the elect, will glorify the wisdom of God by accomplishing both the perfect, uncompromising justice of God and at the same time extending the saving mercy of God.

So before we rush headlong into this next section, and even before we take a, a very careful look at the paragraph we just read, it's to our advantage that we stop for a moment and back out of this just a bit to see the themes of the text just a bit more clearly. Because in the paragraph before us, we need to understand first that Jesus is on a mission of mercy. He's on a mission of mercy.

And at the same time as he's on this mission of mercy, he's not thinking only about his own involvement in that. He's thinking about his apostles. He's thinking about the future of the church, what we are here, right now, what we're doing. He's thinking about all that. So he is training up missionaries of mercy, these twelve.

It might be hard to see that second point just now since James and John have just proposed the nuclear option with these Samaritans. Mercy? They've got a lot to learn, don't they? I mean, don't we all? Don't we all have a lot to learn about mercy?

Knowing that these men, who are not naturally inclined toward mercy, they're not culturally, historically, religiously inclined toward mercy. But this is Jesus' starting material. And as we read in volume two of Luke's work, the book of Acts, you'll see how the Lord used these very men to extend the mercy of God through the Gospel. All of that is a testament to the power of God that transforms men like this from being would be executioners and turning them into ministers of mercy. The radical change in these men is explicable only by the influence of Jesus Christ, who is the very model of missionary mercy.

So the theme of the text this morning is mercy, the mercy of God toward those who are in need. The mercy of God toward those who are lost, to those who are in darkness, to those who act out and speak out of the ignorance of unbelief. Those kinds

of people are represented here in the text by the Samaritans. But apart from the kindness of God our Savior, you and I need to realize, this is us.

These Samaritans and their rejection of Jesus Christ, this is us. And what James and John have proposed about the snuffing out of their life isn't entirely wrong. To reject the eternal Son of God? Beloved, you and I, before God was gracious to us in time and space, this is us, rejecting the eternal Son of God. We deserved judgment for that act. We deserved judgment for our sin and our rebellion. But God extended mercy, mercy to us.

Naturally on our own we are disinclined to receiving Christ. We're all trapped in, before his grace, before his kindness, we're trapped in our bitterness. We're blinded by our prejudices. We act according to old grievances. We exhibit petty jealousies and silly rivalries. And so these Samaritans are us folks, they're us.

Just notice, though, how Jesus treated their offense against him. Instead of exacting judgment, which they and all of us deserve, Jesus actually advocated for the Samaritans here. He sued for mercy, for peace, for patience, for toleration, for the sake of an eventual, realized peace.

He sees, Jesus sees their present ignorance, and while he does not excuse them, here, but he has compassion on them. And he is the one who will accomplish that greatest work, taking care of their most profound need. And one day, it's actually in the text according to the timing of the text, it's one day very soon. It's not long from now he's going to send Spirit empowered missionaries to them, so that many of these Christ rejecting Samaritans will turn to God in faith, they will find forgiveness, they will find eternal salvation. Isn't that better by far?

This has been a major theme in Luke's Gospel from the very beginning. It's the theme of the book of Acts as well. Both Luke and Acts tell the story of God's mercy. Divine love that's

extended to guilty, suffering sinners by the means of those who are sent by God as missionaries.

Luke actually began his narrative, telling the story of God's mercy, beginning with the very first missionary that we see in the text, which is who? Jesus Christ, sent to us. And Luke starts telling the story about that missionary, prepared, being sent by God, even before he was born. The story of divine mercy started back in Luke chapter 1 in the annunciation narratives, announcing the coming of Jesus the Messiah.

You can read in Mary's song, Zechariah's song, both of those highlighting the mercy of God in sending Jesus to restore Israel and to proclaim the favor of God. Mary said this in her song of praise, Luke chapter 1 verse 50, that "the mercy of God is for those who fear him from generation to generation." And she returns to mercy in verse 54, "He has helped his servant Israel in remembrance of his mercy as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever."



The faithful priest Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, he also highlighted the mercy of God, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people" verse 72, "to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant." And Zechariah pointed to Christ, the one who was to come. It says in verses 77 and 70 through 79, "to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

Folks, that's mercy, mercy of God, to shine light to those who are in darkness and living under the shadow of death. And then in Luke chapter 2, Jesus came. The historical fact of his birth and his early childhood, recorded there in the infancy narratives in Luke chapter 2. But it's the Apostle Paul who interpreted that history for us most clearly, writing this Galatians 4:4-5, "when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption

as sons." Again, that's mercy. The coming of Christ is the mercy of God on display. God sent his Son.

The story of divine mercy continues on as Luke records the preparation of Christ throughout the ministry of John the Baptist. Jesus comes, we see him fully grown, entering into ministry. And it's by his participation in the baptism of John in Luke 3 that he enters into ministry, followed by his testing in the wilderness in Luke chapter 4. Again, his preparation is evidence of God's mercy.

In John's preaching, John exposed and confronted sinners in their sins. And then in John's baptism, Jesus identified with sinners and their sins even though he had no sins. John said, "'I need to be baptized by you, do you come to me?' and Jesus said, 'Let it be so, for thus it is,' finally, "fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.'"

When he entered into the wilderness temptation, the testings, he too experienced what it was like for us to be

tested, and yet he never failed. All of this is the unveiling of God's tender, tender mercy, as Zechariah said. It's like sunshine that shines on a cold and dark land to give light and life and peace to, really, us who are by nature dead people.

When God sends his mercy, it's not an abstract, disembodied concept. Notice that. He doesn't send mercy as an abstract principle taught and advocated by some guru in weird clothing, as some kind of ethical ideal we all must strive for. When God sends mercy, notice that he sends a person, flesh and blood. He sends not just a person he sends an infant, born in a normal human way. He sends a helpless babe, laid in a manger, wrapped in swaddling clothes.

It's the very picture of God's tenderness in his mercy. That child grew from infancy into childhood and then from childhood into manhood, experiencing all the things that we experience in life. When God sends his mercy, he sends his one and only Son, not abstracted, but incarnated. His favorite title Son of Man, Son of Man.

If you haven't been following along in your Bibles with me, what Chapter 1, 2, 3, 4, now it's time. Turn to Luke 4:14. I want to show you as he commences his ministry and see how the Son of Man, how this preacher of divine mercy, sent to show divine mercy, how he entered into a ministry of mercy. Again, as we said, we're leaving the first section today of Luke's Gospel. The theme of that section has been the introduction of God's mercy in Christ. Holy angels announced the coming of Christ, miracles of power, supernatural acts of mercy validated Jesus as the Christ that was truly commissioned by God. And then God revealed Jesus' identity as the Christ of God to his chosen apostles, to his disciples.

This is Luke's plan in the beginning of this Gospel, his first section, Luke 4:14 to 9:50, to announce, introduce, validate, and identify as, Jesus as the true Christ of God. This is the one that God sent into the world to show his mercy. It all started in Galilee, announced first in Jesus' home town of Nazareth.

Look at chapter 4 verse 14, "Jesus returned," returned from where? "from the wilderness," where he just basically sabotaged the devil's intent to derail him from his mission. "So he returned in," the spi, in "the power of the Spirit to Galilee. And a report about him went out throughout all the surrounding country, and he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all. And he came up to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him and he unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.'"

The very next phrase in Isaiah, "and to proclaim the judgment of vengeance of God." He stopped there, he didn't proclaim it, he did not read that. It says "he rolled up the scroll," verse 20, "and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, 'Today this Scripture has been fulfilled

in your hearing.’ Everyone spoke well of him, marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth.”

Sadly, these Nazarenes, his own people, rejected him. So Jesus established ministry headquarters in Capernaum. He still had a mission of mercy to accomplish. The people of Capernaum, not Nazareth, but Capernaum, they would become the beneficiaries of these gracious words. They would marvel at the power of his preaching, the glory of God in his works of mercy.

They and so many others in and around Galilee would become both witnesses and beneficiaries of divine mercy. And as we review the chapters, you can track along with me in your Bibles, we can, we can track the nature and the character of Jesus’ mission of mercy. So follow along in your Bibles, just scan the pages. In chapter 4 you can see that after this event, they come down into verse 31.

And Jesus shows mercy to a man who is possessed by an unclean spirit, casting out the demon. He also, next, heals

Peter's mother-in-law of this debilitating fever. By the end of that day, word has gotten out, and he is healing everyone who's brought to him, who are sick with various diseases. He's casting out demons from many.

Flip over into chapter 5. Jesus shows mercy to a leper. He actually cleansed the man, doing what no one would do by touching him. That's unheard of. It shows mercy. He heals a paralytic, next, with a word. He calls this despised tax collector Levi to personal discipleship. And then he eats with all of Levi's socially unacceptable friends.

Chapter 6, Jesus shows mercy to a man with a, a withered hand, starting in verse 6 and following, a man who was unable to work, a man who was ostracized by the Pharisees and the scribes and Jesus shows mercy. He calls the Twelve of his disciples to be his apostles in verses 12 through 16. That's an immediate mercy to those twelve men, but it's a far flung, far reaching mercy to us, to the church. And then Jesus teaches.

He delivers the Sermon on the Mount, laying down principle after principle of divine mercy. "I say to you who hear," verse 27, "love your enemies." That's mercy. He says, "Love your enemies," verse 35, "and do good. Lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great. You'll be sons of the Most High, for he is kind," or merciful, "to the ungrateful and the evil. Be merciful as your father is merciful." Incredible mercy!

Chapter 7, Jesus shows mercy to the dying servant of a Roman centurion. That's incredible mercy because these Romans are the occupying force in Israel. He doesn't take political sides, there. He shows mercy. He sees the transcendent principle, and he loves this Roman centurion. He loves him, shows mercy.

Next, he raises the only, one and only son of a widow, a desperate widow. Bereaved of her husband and about to be bereaved of her son, she has been bereaved of her son, he died. He stops the funeral procession in progress and he does again what no other person would do, he touched the bier, the funeral bier. He stopped the procession, and he raised that son from the



dead. An insignificant little village called Nain, we would never know about it except for what he accomplished there.

At the end of the chapter, he shows mercy again. He receives the worship of a forgiven woman. He accepts her whom all others had rejected. In mercy and kindness he received her to himself. He identified with her rather than with the guests at the table.

Chapter 8, we see Jesus showing mercy to fearful apostles, verses 22 and following. He calms a raging storm on the Sea of Galilee by commanding the wind and the waves, using power, again, to show mercy. He casts out, next, the legion of demons from the Gerasene man, and then he extends mercy even further to the entire region of the Decapolis by sending that man back as a missionary to take good news to his own people.

And in mercy, Jesus raised the one and only daughter of Jairus and his wife from the dead. While he was traveling along the way to their home, he stops to pay attention to a woman

who's been suffering from a twelve year hemorrhage. And he shows mercy to her, too.

In chapter 9, the chapter we've been studying Jesus shows mercy to all of Galilee. At the very beginning, he sends out the twelve apostles to proclaim the Kingdom of God and to heal. In mercy and compassion, Jesus feeds five thousand men, women and children besides. And then as we've seen most recently, Jesus cast out the demon of the one and only boy of a devastated father, literally giving this boy back to his father as in life from the dead. Restoring not only life but relationship.

That's mercy, mercy after mercy after mercy after mercy. Just the first section in Luke's Gospel. It is the story of the magnanimous, supernaturally powerful mercy of God toward the desperate needs of suffering people. That's what makes the lesson in Luke 9:51 to 56 so important for us to hear. As we said, James and John, in Luke 9:51 and following, they're ready to nuke a Samaritan village. And they're asking permission from Jesus, thinking this is his heart. They expect a, yes, answer.

They failed to recognize that he is the very model of missionary mercy. He embodies, incarnates God's mercy. He's been sent on a mission of mercy to manifest the nature and the character of divine mercy to those who are in such desperate need. And then he's commissioned these men to show mercy as well, and what do they do?

So let's talk about that. These apostles obviously, they desperately needed this instruction. But what about you? What about me? If we can go back and get into the minds of these first century men and then, when we're honest in assessing ourselves, in thinking about our thoughts, in coming to stop and analyze and assess our own judgments, our attitudes toward people, we come to see how seldom we show mercy. We come to see how often harshness, and impatience, and selfishness, and intolerance, how often that can be our first instinct as well.

The lack of mercy has its source in pride, which is why the story before us so fittingly connected to the previous two accounts that we've gone through. Remember, the disciples argued about who's the greatest among them? I mean they were, they were

dripping with pride in that conversation. They were then censorious toward a friend of the Gospel, another child whom Jesus had received. And those actions of theirs find their source in a heart of pride, as does the unmerciful suggestion of James and John to nuke this Samaritan village.

For those who show no mercy, those who are unsympathetic, who lack empathy and compassion for others and fail to pursue it, that's a clear sign of ugly, small-minded pride. And where pride is embedded deeply in the heart, self-focus dominates the thought life, self-concern dominates the life. There is no mercy. Folks, we can be like that, can't we? We have to root out pride from our hearts and kill it. We need to see it for the deadly cancer that it is, which means we've all got a lot to learn about mercy, don't we?

We see in this passage three characteristics of mercy. Luke 9:51 to 56, three characteristics of mercy. You've got three blanks in your bulletin outline today. We're only going to fill in one today, okay? My introduction took all the time. But that's

okay because verse 51 is, really, a pivotal verse in understanding the rest of the story.

So we're only going to cover one of these three points for this morning. But my first point, you'll be glad to know, has three sub points. So don't fret, there's plenty of meat coming on the plate. First point, as we look into Jesus as the model of missionary mer, mercy you can fill this in your outlines. Mercy is characterized by firmness. Mercy is characterized by firmness.

That might not have been the word that you called to mind as you thought, "What goes in that blank?" You might have thought mercy is characterized by softness or flexibility. Not here. Not now. We'll get to those qualities in a second or next week, I guess. We typically think of mercy though as, we don't typically think of mercy as something firm, something rigid, something hard, and inflexible, but that just shows us how we don't always think biblically about virtue.

We tend to feel our way to what we think is true, rather than reading God's Word and thinking his thoughts, which are the essence of truth. So we need to scrap our preconceived notions about what we think mercy is. Scrap our preconceived notions about we think love is. We need to go back to Scripture and see what God tells us.

So look again at verse 51, "When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem." That verse paints a picture of firmness. It paints a picture of resolve. To set one's face to do something, that is an idiomatic phrase in this culture. The verb that Luke uses there, *sterizo*, it, it denotes stability, lasting, long term fixedness. It denotes solid, solidity, strength, particularly when facing difficulty.

In fact, as one author put it, "It is precisely in the midst of the worse difficulties that changeless fixedness must be shown." That's Jesus, here. Knowing what awaited him in Jerusalem, Jesus has set his face to go to Jerusalem. He more than anyone knew what suffering, what difficulty, what deadly painful hostility would meet him there and so he steeled his

spine, he set his jaw, he leaned into it. And he was resolved, he was determined, he was rigid and inflexible about accomplishing his mission, especially in view of all the pain and the danger that faced him.

This is a manly quality, to face danger, difficulty, suffering, never shrinking back, but always facing forward, always leaning into it, hitting it head on. It's the quality that Paul spoke of in 1 Corinthians 16:13, "Be watchful, stand firm in the faith. Act like men. Be strong." Remember, he says that to an entire church. The Corinthian church, men and women alike, are to have this "stand firm in faith, act like men, be strong" qualities.

He's intentionally, even as he calls the church to be manly, he's intentionally gender nonspecific. As the Messiah, Jesus is like this. He is the one who fulfills the servant songs of the prophecies in Isaiah, and he had to have this text from Isaiah in his mind as he set his face to go to Jerusalem. Isaiah 50 verse 4 says, "The Lord God has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with the Word him

who is weary." Once again, a picture of mercy, applying the Word of God to sustain those who are weary. God takes note of those who are weary, in suffering and pain, that is mercy.

But the demands of mercy for the Suffering Servant, for him, they, they go to an even deeper resolve in Isaiah 50. It says, this is the Suffering Servant, this is Jesus speaking, "The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious. I turned not backward." In the words of Hebrews that we read earlier, "I did not shrink back. I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard. I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting. But the Lord God helps me, therefore, I have not been disgraced. Therefore, I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame. He who vindicates me is near."

How can Jesus do that? You know what it is to "set your face like flint?" Ever strike anything against flint, a blade against flint to sharpen it? It's a hard substance, set his face like that. How does he do that? How does, how does he steel his



spine under the shadow of the deadly cross? Because he knows that God is near. He knows that God will vindicate his cause.

Here's Jesus, verse 51, he's on the march. He's heading to Jerusalem. He's fixed, he's resolved, he's uncompromisingly firm on where he's going, about what's ahead of him, what he has to do. Nothing will deter him. What we need to see is that this rigidity, this resolute attitude, it is borne, here, out of a deep commitment to this divine mission of mercy. This is his commission, which is, from the very beginning, it is from God.

A few things I want you to see here. Here's your subpoints, several subpoints here, several things to see about which Jesus is absolutely firm and inflexible. Three subpoints. Subpoint A, we'll call it, Jesus was firm about the true demands of mercy. Jesus was firm about the true demands of mercy. Verse 51 points us to that, the true demands of mercy, the deepest needs of the ministry of mercy, delineated clearly in prophetic Scripture.

The mind of Christ is informed at all times by Scripture, which meant he's always cognizant of his mission to bring God's mercy to God's people according to the written will of God. We know this, the most pressing and profound needs of ministry. They're not the physical and temporal, are they? They're not the superficial or circumstantial problems of life. They're not the lack of health or wealth or happiness.

Divine mercy, which we're all instructed in, looks beyond those things, beneath the superficial issues of wealth, and health, and sickness, and disease. The mercy of God deals, heals more deeply than emotional sadness and sorrow. Mercy even looks past the cruelty and degradation of things like demon possession. Mercy realizes that sin is the issue. Sin is the issue.

Divine mercy has eyes to see what truly ails us, to see what really does plague the human race, to see the sin that opened the floodgates to the demonic. Paul writes, Romans 5:12, "Sin came into the world through one man and death through sin,

and so death spread to all men because all sinned." It's like a virus. It's the very worst virus in the entire world.

Jesus didn't come to provide the cure for the common cold, to wipe our noses, to help us get over the flu. He didn't come to cure cancer or eradicate human hunger or rectify economic and housing inequality in our land. He didn't come to save us from back aches and tummy aches and foot problems and head problems and all the rest. Jesus came to save us from our sins.

He came to save us from the wrath of God that is the due penalty for our sins. He came to save us from our trespasses against a holy God. He came to save us from the consequences of our rebellion against a good and kind God. That's why he came, and that's what Luke is telling us in verse 51, "When the days drew near for him to be taken up," that's one concept there and then, "he set his face to go to Jerusalem," that's another. Luke is there pointing in this summary to God's greatest concern. He's helping us to see the true demands of mercy, which are profoundly spiritual in nature.

What the ESV translators render, there, as for him to be, taken up, makes it sound like, taken up, there is a verb. It's not a verb, there it's the noun *analempsis*. *Analempsis*, which means ascension. We've already said this back in verse 22, again in verse 44, as Jesus predicted his suffering for sins, his atoning work for the forgiveness of the sins of the people. The atoning work would come about by the means of his rejection by the Jewish religious leaders. His crucifixion would come at the hands of men, Jewish and Roman, Jew and Gentile alike. His triumph would come in the resurrection. Jesus summarizes all of that with the word *analempsis*, ascension, lifted up.

Back in verse 31, you can see it there on the Mount of Transfiguration, that this was what Jesus is talking about with Moses and Elijah. The word there, we talked about this, is the word *exodus*, departure. He talked with the representatives of the Law and the Prophets, both of whom, their ministries, he would fulfill. And Jesus looked beyond the rejection, past the death and burial, he even saw beyond the triumph of resurrection. He looked forward to his reunion with the Father, what we call the ascension to the Father's right hand. Jesus saw through all the suffering, he saw to the glory.

But first, the mercy of God demanded the suffering of the cross. It demanded the accomplishment of the atonement, to provide forgiveness of sins for his people. This is what we've read so often in Isaiah 53, such a beloved chapter, "it was the will of the Lord to crush him." God, himself, put the Son of God to grief. Why? So that his soul, the life of Christ, the soul of Christ, would become an offering for our guilt.

Paul wrote, Galatians 3:13, "Christ came to redeem us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. For it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.'" It's a reference again to crucifixion. This is prophesied in a, Psalm 22 and among a number of other places in Old Testament Scripture. Where's that prediction of the crucifixion, where's it to take place? In Jerusalem. That's why Jesus set his fact to go there. Luke 13:33, he says, "I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem."

That's where the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes are located. That's their stronghold, that's where they are, that's where the judgment will take place, in Jerusalem. And they are the ones who judged Jesus, according to Isaiah 53, saying this, "He had no form or majesty that we should look at him, no beauty that we should desire him." In fact, they said, "he was despised and rejected by men," he's, "a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. He was," one, "as one from whom men hide their faces. He was despised and we esteemed him not. We esteemed instead stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted." That was their judgment. So they crucified him.

What they failed to see, these scribes, elders, chief priests, Pharisees, the most taught of the taught, not just in the land of Israel, you need to understand, they were instructed from the law of Moses, which was the greatest of all, it so far surpasses all philosophy of all human history. Why? Because it's revealed from God, from Heaven, and they were experts in the law of Moses. The greatest minds in the whole earth put him to death.

They were blinded by their pride. They were provoked to jealousy by his ministry, by his favor with the people. They were hypocrites. They were sinful. That's what Jesus could see all along, the judgment of the Jews, the leaders, religious leaders in Jerusalem's establishment. Jesus could see that. But he knew, God is going to use that rejection, the rejection of their own Messiah, he's going to use that rejection to affect the salvation of the world. "He was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace. With his wounds we are healed." Atonement for sins.

Christ substituting his own life for ours, for all who would ever believe, to bear our own sins in his own body, to absorb the wrath of God due against us, that is the true and the deepest demand of mercy. Jesus could see that clearly. He always had it on his mind. In order to fulfill his commission, in order to complete his mission of mercy, in order to satisfy the demands of divine justice, in order to fulfill God's desire to show mercy to us guilty sinners.

I am, I am so grateful that in mercy he was firm about that. Aren't you? Without the shedding of his blood, there is no forgiveness of sins. Jesus was firm, resolved, rigid, inflexible in showing the profoundest mercy. He applied it to our deepest need. He held fast to reveal truth. He stood firm in Scripture, firm about the demands of mercy.

What about you, beloved? What about you? Does your concern for people around you, family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, even strangers, does your mercy only attend to problems on the level of sniffles, sneezes, spiritually speaking? Are you offering spiritual Kleenexes and Band-aids to those who are actually dying of cancer?

Are you only able to see the consequences of sin, money problems, parenting issues, misplaced priorities, emotional wounds from a sad upbringing, and do you then refer to those things as mistakes, bad decisions, errors in judgment, poor choices? Are you unable to look at them, and I mean really look at them, these people, and see how sin is the issue, not just a mistake here and there?



This is not to be unkind in our judgment, it is to be incredibly kind, to call it what it is, so we can deal with the actual problem, apply God's grace to the needs, the demands of mercy, to show how sin is the issue. To see how unbelief, and rebellion against a holy God, is at the root of all things. Because beloved, if you're not doing that, you're not like Jesus. You're not firm and resolved in addressing the true demands of mercy.

If you're only doing that, you're just putting Band-aids on those who are bleeding out, arterial bleeding from a wound that is gaping. A mortal wound, instead of taking radical action to put a tourniquet on that thing and cauterize the wound with the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ. Beloved, the things we see on the surface, that draw us to people and it should. But as we address those things, do not neglect the deeper issues, which are sin related. Be firm and resolved in your mercy as well, like Christ.

Let's consider a second subpoint, subpoint B. Jesus was firm about the divine timeframe of mercy. The divine timeframe of mercy. Luke tells us the days were drawing near for Jesus' death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. They days were literally being filled up. Jesus is on a divine schedule. He's never subject to the demands and dictates of men. He's never, he never attends to their timing. That's been the case since the earliest days when Jesus moved from Nazareth to Capernaum, and he commenced his Galilean ministry. They wanted Jesus to stick around. I mean, who wouldn't?

Here's a guy who heals everything. He takes care of all maladies. But Jesus refused. He was mindful of his commission, verse 43, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well. For I was sent for this purpose." Sent for what purpose, to heal all the sicknesses and maladies? No, those would just be spawned over and over and over again through the presence and the power of sin, because of death in the world.

No, Jesus said, "I must preach the good news," I must preach the Gospel. And so he did. Jesus embarked, as we've studied, on a preaching tour of the region of Galilee. He saturated the cities, the towns, the villages, the hamlets, tiny places like Nain. He visited them all, great and small. He taught them, healed them, cast out demons, ministered Mercy of God.

Now, though, it's time to leave Galilee. Ever since the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus had discerned a change in the attitude of the Galileans. Hearts were being revealed to him. In fact, if you have your Bibles there, turn over to John 6 and you can get a, get a glimpse of this for yourself. If you scan the, the page in John chapter 6, you'll see a connection to what we've studied in Luke 9, the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000. That's the very first a, a narrative right there in John chapter 6 verses 1 to 14. "And when Jesus perceived," in verse 15, "that crowds were about to come and take him by force to make him king," it says there that, "Jesus withdrew to the mountain by himself." Why?

He is, he is king. He is going to enter into Jerusalem, a triumphal entry, but he is not on their timetable. He's not on their schedule. He knows what they're after. He knows why they're trying to make them king. He is not going to submit to that.

Remember, they're near Bethsaida. They're east of the Jordan River, so when Jesus disappears from that place, that location, the disciples, they went looking for him, and they returned in the boat back to Capernaum. So Jesus walks on the water that night to catch up with them, verses 16-21. They end up back in Capernaum. The crowds, they, too, went looking for Jesus, verses 22 to 24.

When they finally arrive at Capernaum, seeking Jesus, Jesus sees right through their motives, doesn't he? Look down at verse 26, John 6, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are not seeking me because you saw the signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves." They wanted an earthly king, one who would feed their stomachs. That's it. That's what they wanted.

The resulting lesson that Jesus gives throughout the rest of the chapter is on Jesus as the Bread of Life, and that is the bulk of John 6. And as Jesus teaches them, the crowd becomes increasingly agitated. They become impatient with him. At the end they're even scornful.

By the end of the chapter, their hearts are fully revealed, verse a, chapter 6 verse 60 it says, "When many of the disciples heard this saying," heard his teaching, "they said, 'this is a hard saying who can listen to it?'" And as a result, verse 66, "Many of his disciples," they were acknowledged, known, seen, as disciples. In our language we might say they were seen, acknowledged, professing Christians, "many of his disciples," though, "turned back and no longer walked with him."

They walk right off the pages of Scripture, don't they? Never to be heard from again. They wanted free food. They wanted their stomachs filled. They wanted a meal ticket. They were ready to crown him king to get those things. But they were so short sighted, weren't they?

Jesus was not following their plan. Why? Because his mercy had deeper concerns. So they're done. They're done with him. They're not following him anymore. Sad day for Jesus, isn't it? But clarifying. Well as it turns out it was, it was direction setting. Look at verse fif, 67, "Jesus said to the twelve, 'Do you want to go away as well?'" He knows the answer, he just wants to draw it out of them. "Simon Peter answered him," who else but Simon, right, "'Lord, to whom shall we go?'" This is one of Simon's triumphant moments. "'You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed and have come to know that you are the Holy One of God.'" Jesus answered them, 'Did I not choose you, the twelve?'" Did I not choose you? What came first, their faith or his choosing?

Beloved, do you feel this way? Do you ever come to those points of darkness in the soul, deep discouragement, and you say, this is too much. This is too much, too many demands. At the end of the day, you say exactly what Peter says: Where am I going to go? Where am I going to go? Lord, by your grace, by your kindness and your mercy, you have hemmed me in behind and before, front and back, you are pushing me along, and the only way is forward, and I'm going to go. I'm going to endure. I'm

going to stay. That is evidence of God's grace in your life, that you stay.

After that remarkable miracle, feeding the five thousand, after trying to teach the Galileans that he is the bread of life, not like Moses gave them in the wilderness, manna that passed through their body and then was not more, but the true Bread of Life, to give spiritual vitality for eternity. They rejected him.

And Jesus turned his attention to his men. He turned his attention to teach the Twelve. He ministered around Galilee, in and around Galilee, but he really did depart from Galilee. He was going north to Tyre and Sidon, he was north, up north in Caesarea Philippi. He took his apostles away to reveal his identity as the Christ as God. Now take a look in chapter, John chapter 7, verses 2-9, because this is what happens immediately prior to our text in Luke 9:51.

John 10, in fact, is exactly parallel in time to Luke 9:51. But notice what happened just prior. Luke at John 7 verse 2, "Now the," Jew, "Jews' Feast of Booths was at hand." This is also called the Feast of Tabernacles, "So," Jesus' "brothers said to him, 'Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing. No one does the works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world.' For not even his brothers believed in him."

In an attitude of cynicism, they say, if you want to make a claim on Messiahship for Israel, quit performing private miracles. Take your show out to the public. Don't just do this for your adoring fans that are already committed. Convince everyone. Submit yourself to the priests. Let them see you. Let Jerusalem validate you. Look at verse 6, "Jesus said to them, 'My time has not yet come, your time is always here.'"

Ah, it feels so free and easy to be an unbeliever, doesn't it? Any time is a good time. I don't have to think about it, just do what I want to do. Jesus says, "Your time is always



here, my time has not yet come." I'm on a different schedule. Verse 7, "The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil. You go up to the feast. I am not going up to this feast." We might insert by interpretation the word yet. "'You go up to the feast, I'm not going up to this feast," in parenthesis, yet, "'for my time has not yet fully come.' After saying this, he remained in Galilee."

We don't know how long Jesus remained in Galilee, but he did stay behind. He refused to submit to cynical pressure from his unbelieving brothers. He ignored their sense of timing; any time's a good time. Going up right then to the Feast of Booths, going up meant traveling with them, it meant the pursuit of their agenda, and Jesus could not do that, so he stayed back.

Later on, Jesus came to a different conclusion. He ignored the pressure and timing of men, even his own family, and he was sensitive to God's leading. He responded to the Spirit's direction. Verse 10 says, "But after his brothers had gone up to the feast, then he also went up, not publicly, but in private." So he went with a, in a different direction with a different

party. That doesn't indicate duplicity or provide evidence of a contradiction. That's just called making a different decision later. That's what he did. He made one decision in the face of their cynical, unbelieving pressure. Then he made a different decision in light of divine direction.

The timing of the travel is interesting, here. The Feast of Booths, Feast of Tabernacles, happened around September or October, early fall. So from the Feast of Tabernacles in October to the Passover in early April, when Jesus died on the cross, that's about six months of time. It doesn't take six months to walk from Capernaum in Galilee to Jerusalem of Judea. It doesn't take six months. It takes weeks at the most. Along Jesus' route, three days.

Jesus' brothers, many other pilgrims living around the Sea of Galilee, they took a route to Jerusalem that avoided passing through Samaria. That was the direct route. They went east of the Sea of Galilee, east of the Jordan through Perea. That required two river crossings, hazardous, took more time. So the

whole journey could take anywhere from one to three weeks, but definitely not six months.

Our text says, you can turn back to Luke 9:51 now, our text says that Jesus went through Samaria, and going through Samaria shaved quite a bit of time off. It only took about three days' time. Even though there was deep seated hostility, religious, historical hostility between Jews and Samaritans, many Galileans who lived in that region opted for that shorter route. It was dangerous, but they saved time.

Even though Luke 9:51 says, "He set his face to Jerusalem," I just want you to see by explaining that, that Jesus did not make a direct bee line to Jerusalem, getting there as fast as possible for the cross. The cross is still six months away. While he is going there, I should say he is not hurrying there. He's still walking according to a divine timetable. He's still led along by the Holy Spirit.

Find out by comparing with John's Gospel, in fact, that Jesus arrived in Jerusalem and departed from Jerusalem three times, three times between here and the crucifixion. John 7 says Jesus went to Jerusalem on this occasion. He also went for the Feast of Dedication and the Feast of the Passover, the Unleavened Bread. So he came back to Jerusalem in December, John 10:22, the Feast of Dedication that's, what we call it Hanukkah. He left again in John 10:40 to 42 to avoid premature arrest.

So he starts here on his journey, John 7:10, Luke 9:51, he arrives in Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles, that's the month of Tishrei, October, then he withdrew from Jerusalem. He went back to Jerusalem again for the Feast of Dedication, Hanukkah, during winter, the Jewish month of Kislev, our December, and he left again. And Jesus would go up to Jerusalem one final time, the Jewish month of Nissan, our April, for Passover. That's his terminal destination, that's where he dies on the cross.

He's on a divine timetable. He's marching according to orders from God, the Holy Spirit. So what is he doing in the

meantime? If he has “set his face to go to Jerusalem,” why the seemingly meandering route, why the in and the out? Well, the divine time frame involved Jesus’ firm resolve of about more one more matter.

That brings us to one final subpoint for this morning, subpoint C, Jesus was firm about preparing his apostles for the future administration of mercy. Jesus was firm, his mercy was firm, and he was firm about preparing his apostles for the future administration of mercy. If you don’t like that length, just write, missionary preparation. Jesus chose these men, he called these men, he commissioned these men, he intends to train these men. And they need it, don’t they?

Makes for a very interesting study in Luke’s Gospel if you go through the Gospel and see how the verb *apostello* is used *apostello* is the Greek word, to send, see how that’s used. Incidentally, it’s the Latin verb *mittere*, *mittere*, M I T T E R E, that translates the Greek verb *apostello*. The noun form in Latin is *misseo*, from which we get the words mission and

missionary. Just want you to see how mission, missionary traces back to *apostello* to send, to be sent.

We can trace this verb though back from the very beginning in Luke's Gospel. The Lord sent Jesus into the world on a mission of mercy, as Jesus said, Luke 4:18, "The Spirit of the Lord has sent me." *Apostello*, missionary, mission. Jesus went on the first cross cultural mission to the Gerasene territory, making his first convert in Luke 8, and then in verse 38, Jesus "sent him back." *Apostello*, to take the Gospel to his own people, missions.

Jesus sent the Twelve, Luke 9:1 and 2 as ministers of mercy, giving them power and authority over demons and to cure diseases, and Jesus "sent them out," *apostello*, "to proclaim the kingdom and to heal." Luke 9:48, "Whoever receives the child receives me, whoever receives me receives him who sent me." *Apostello*, again. Verse 52 in our own text, "Jesus sent," *apostello*, "sent messengers ahead of him." Setting the pattern for Luke 10:1, "He appointed seventy two others and sent them

ahead of him," *apostello*, "sent them two by two into every town and into every place where he himself was about to go."

The journey, there's more that we can show, but that's enough. The journey starts here in Luke 9:51, "He set his face toward Jerusalem." Along the way, moving at God's pace, according to his time frame, according to his plan. He is resolved Jesus is, he's resolved to train the Twelve. That means that this next section in Luke's Gospel is full of Jesus' teaching.

It is some of the richest teaching. Some count seventeen parables, twenty parables, in this next major section of Luke's Gospel, filled with Jesus' teaching. Those of you who may have a red letter edition of the Bible, that puts Jesus' words in red letters, you'll see from here through chapter 19 that most of the text looks like someone bled all over your Bible, it's all in red.

Jesus has a whole lot to say to prepare these men to be ministers of mercy, to represent him as missionaries of mercy, to testify to the mercy of God in the Gospel. And we, beloved, are going to be the beneficiaries of all that teaching, all that training. Let's just remember, though, as we eat and drink deeply of all the wonderful things that Jesus will teach us, this teaching, originally given by Jesus to his apostles, it is for the purpose of preparing his apostles.

What's he preparing them for? To send them. They're not getting good teaching from Christ to have a better devotional life. They're not getting all this teaching to just get them through another busy day in the cosmopolitan city of Jerusalem. Oh, I'm so weary from all the traffic, camels and donkeys and such, and I just need a little bit of refreshment. Let me we go back to what Jesus taught here, no, that's not what this is about. Jesus is teaching the Twelve to send them.

And the reason he's teaching us, now, can you guess, right, to send us, right? You guys good with that? Of course. Of course. We're Christians. This is what we do. We go out. We're



sent, commissioned by God. We need to realize that we, you and me beloved, we, we are his representatives taking the mercy of God to all those who need it, and there are so many who need it. That's our high and holy privilege as Christians. We've got a lot more to learn about mercy. Two more points to cover just in this text, but we'll do that when we come together next time. Bow with me for a word of prayer.

Our Father, we thank you so much for showing mercy to us. We thank you that, like that Gerasene demoniac, you've sent us back into our land, in our time, our place, into our own village and town and region, to be ministers of mercy. We thank you that we belong to you by your grace, by your mercy, because of your love. We thank you that you've taken care of our deepest need, which is sin against you.

We thank you that we are forgiven. We thank you that Christ's perfect righteousness covers us like a garment. We stand before you, fearing nothing, but loving you. Everything we do now is out of love and out of worship. We want to glorify you. We want to uphold Christ and proclaim his Gospel. Will you

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*Greeley*

please help us to do that by your grace, by your Spirit? Help us to be accurate in conveying the truth of your Word, but also the tone of your Word, and that tone is mercy. Let us never forget that. In Jesus' name, by your grace, amen.