

The Model of Missionary Mercy, Part 2

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."

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. 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. 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.

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. 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 Cesarea 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.

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. 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, 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
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.