

It's Time to Do Ministry

Matthew 9:35-38; Luke 9:1-40

During the early days of COVID-19 we were introduced to a number of new terms. Many of them stuck. Who remembers “bending the curve”,

However, one of the most impactful and polarizing words I have heard used is the word “essential.” There are essential workers, essential services and essential businesses and there is a great debate in some circles as to whether the church is essential. Therefore, I began looking into the word of God for scripture that could inform my reasoning and discussion for today’s lesson.

Luke takes us on a journey with Jesus and his disciples and shows us what it means to be essential. In Luke chapter 9, we get a good look at the intricacies of essential ministry. Let us start at the end and work our way back to find answers.

The next day, after they had come down the mountain, a large crowd met Jesus. A man in the crowd called out to him, “Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, my only child. An evil spirit keeps seizing him, making him scream. It throws him into convulsions so that he foams at the mouth. It batters him and hardly ever leaves him alone. I begged your disciples to cast out the spirit, but they couldn’t do it.” (Luke 9:38-40)

- Jesus set the standard for essential (vital, indispensable, crucial, critical) ministry.
- By sending the twelve out with specific instructions, Jesus established and clarified the disciple’s role with him.
- As those who would reproduce the works of Jesus; they were classified and identified as disciples.

One of the main hindrances to our freedom is our lack of identity. Much of our identity is tied up in who we portray ourselves to be verses the essence of whom we are. In today’s lesson, Jesus takes time to declare that we can remain essential only as we see ourselves through the eyes of the Master. Here is a glimpse of what essential ministry looks like:

One day Jesus called together his twelve disciples and gave them power and authority to cast out all demons and to heal all diseases. Then he sent them out to tell everyone about the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick. “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. Wherever you go, stay in the same house until you leave town. 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.” (Luke 9:1-5)

1. He called them together—there is a singleness of purpose

2. He gave them Power and Authority—ability and right
3. He sent them out—to proclaim the kingdom and to perform healing
4. He commanded them to keep it simple
 - a. Take nothing for your journey (vs.3)
 - 1) Staff—protection and support
 - 2) Bag—beggars bag for incidentals
 - 3) Bread—sustenance
 - 4) Money and Clothing
 - b. Stay in one place (vs.4)
 - c. Don't get attached to your surroundings

Between the empowering and authority given in the early verses of chapter 9 and the ineptness (uselessness) of ministry towards the end of the chapter, many things take place.

1. They speak the Word, they heal the sick (v.10),
2. They return from the ministry field to give an account and withdraw to a solitary place (v.11).
3. The multitudes follow and they heal more people (v.12).
4. They feed 5,000 (v.18).
5. Jesus is praying (v.28).
6. Jesus takes three disciples up the mountain where he is transfigured (v.32).

The reality is that the disciples have many things happening in succession and all the demands distract them. Everything feels urgent and immediate. Prayer is present but not accessed at the level the situation requires. There is a deficit that is only realized after a demand is placed on the circumstances surrounding their needs.

Unfortunately, by the time they face the situation they have very little energy to come against the enemy. They are ineffective because they have not been able to replenish the resources that God has so freely given.

Much of the dysfunction in the church today is because of a powerless church trying to hold up the blood stained banner for the Lord with weak praise, a non-existent prayer life, no discipline, very little intimacy and no power.

Insert fervent prayer and you immediately get inspired outcomes. Follow the model of Christ lifestyle and watch God work things out with remarkable results.