

## Coming Down the Mountain

Luke 6:12-19

### Introduction

**Hiking:** We \*hike\* mountains for their beauty. Don't let this body lol you (e.g., Ridgecrest, Rattlesnake with Whitney). I would drag teenagers on hikes, puking because Dr. Pepper isn't the same as water; Fortnite doesn't prep you for hiking, etc. But when you get up there, it's worth it! But coming down is sometimes harder than going up (e.g., Brandi ankle; me falling on my butt). You climb the mountain for the view and the inspiration, but you don't live there (e.g., you can't stay on the summit of Everest). **Fruit is grown in the valley.**

**Monumental Mountains:** Mountains play a monumental role in significant moments in Scripture. Mt. Moriah (Isaac and Abraham). Mt. Sinai (Law). Mt. Carmel (Elijah and prophets of Baal). Sermon on the Mount. Jerusalem is "Mt. Zion" etc.

**Summary:** We're hitting a new moment in the gospel of Luke, and we see that Jesus is clarifying the essence of his ministry. Ultimately, he is showing the radical nature of the Kingdom of God. We will see this in the coming weeks in his teaching. But now we see this in the context of the appointment of the twelve apostles. Their apostleship becomes a paradigm for us as we join Jesus in the new covenant community he is building.

<sup>12</sup> In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God.

<sup>13</sup> And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles: <sup>14</sup> Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, <sup>15</sup> and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, <sup>16</sup> and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor. <sup>17</sup> And he came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, <sup>18</sup> who came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. And those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. <sup>19</sup> And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all.

### 1. Chosen On the Mountain (vv. 12-16)

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**Context:** <sup>12</sup> In these days Just off of the opposition from the Pharisees. We're actually **halfway** between the **baptism** and the **crucifixion** (things moved faster than they appeared). Most of

Luke deals with the **last 18 months** of Jesus' ministry. This is the height of his ministry in Galilee!

**Pray Just to Make it Through the Day:** Before we even get to this important moment it describes Jesus going up the mountain to pray. In fact, all night he continued in prayer to God.

- Prayer was a **regular, essential, and foundational** part of Jesus' life and ministry. A sampling:
  - He would withdraw to desolate places and pray (Lk 5:16).
  - He took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray (Lk 9:28).
  - And he withdrew from them... and knelt down and prayed (Lk 22:41).
- I am not naturally good at prayer (it is a *disciplined* habit, not a *natural* habit). My first instinct is to strategize, plan, and brainstorm ways for me to fix it. Only when I've tried everything I can think of, then I'm forced to pray. It shouldn't be this way. **Prayer should be my first option, not my last resort.**
- We make too many decisions on a whim, based on a vibe, without any real consultation with God.
  - BTW: There are some things you *don't* need to pray about (God is clear). And mostly prayer is an opportunity to get God to conform your understanding and your heart to what he has revealed in his Word.
- **We think we are too busy to pray—we are too busy not to pray!** Do you really think you have more important things to do than Jesus? You can't have better things to do than him. Yet he deliberately set aside time to pray. **Prayer is not the prelude to the work; it is the work!**

**Teach Us:** Do you ever wonder why the disciples didn't ask Jesus how to do miracles, or how to preach, or how to heal? They said, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Lk 11:1). They knew the role of prayer in Jesus's life and recognized its necessity for their own lives. If we want to be Jesus people, then we will be praying people.

**Apostolic Terms:** he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles

- **Office (Closed):** This refers to the specific role or office held by the Apostles chosen by Jesus, including Matthias who replaced Judas Iscariot,<sup>1</sup> and Paul (self-described as a late apostolic addition because of witnessing Jesus on the Road to Damascus: **one untimely born**)<sup>2</sup> These apostles had a unique foundational role in the early church, bearing witness to Jesus' resurrection and carrying authority to teach, preach, and perform miracles. The apostles were specifically called by Christ<sup>3</sup> and had seen the risen Lord Jesus.<sup>4</sup> They established and governed the church under Jesus Christ and had the authority to speak and write the words of God, equal in authority to the OT Scriptures.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 1:26

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor 15:8

<sup>3</sup> Matt. 10:1–7; Acts 1:24–26; Gal. 1:1

<sup>4</sup> Acts 1:22; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:7–9

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. 14:37; 2 Cor. 13:3; Gal. 1:8–9; 1 Thess. 2:13; 4:15; 2 Pet. 3:2, 15–16

The office of an apostle, in this sense, is considered closed, as it was based on having been a direct witness to Jesus' ministry or his resurrection (HT *ESV Study Bible* notes). "Apostle" literally means "sent one" and these are the first twelve "sent out" by Jesus on mission (Lk 9:1-6).

- **Sent One (Ongoing):** This use of the term "apostle" can apply more broadly to anyone sent on a mission by the church. It captures the general meaning of the word "apostle" (to send or sent one). This action-focused definition emphasizes being sent out to accomplish a specific task, often involving spreading the gospel. In the context of **spiritual gifts** (Eph 4:11-13), apostleship can refer to a continuing function or role within the church. This gift involves pioneering new gospel work in unreached areas, planting churches, and establishing new ministries. It is associated with leadership, evangelism, and the ability to cross cultural barriers for the sake of the gospel.

**Why Twelve?:** Is twelve an arbitrary number? Or an ideal setup for multi-level management? In fact, it has deeply **theological** implications. Even by the selection of 12, Jesus is telling us something about what's going on. That there were 12 apostles seems to matter even more than who all of them were. They are not all highlighted in Scripture to the same extent. They are not equally memorable or praiseworthy.

- Like the 12 tribes of Israel were formed into a new nation under God's commands at Mt. Sinai, these twelve apostles figuratively represent the new nation being instituted by Jesus on this mountain in Galilee.
- Jesus is saying the "new covenant" is here. There's a new way to be human (which is actually the old way that God created you to be without sin). His kingdom is coming, and he is king to rule and reign among his people. He will be there God, and they will be his people.
  - <sup>31</sup> "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah... I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jer 31:31, 33).
- In the coming passages, he will explain the nature of the new covenant community, but here, he is signaling its reality.

### Observations:

- **Levels of Leadership:** Jesus had his top 12 (cf. MySpace Top 8). In the various lists of the apostles in the gospels, they are basically the same list.
  - Only Judas the son of James is called "Thaddeus" in Matthew and Mark (cf. Simon Peter, Levi Matthew, etc.).
  - For obvious reasons, Peter is always listed first, and Judas Iscariot (the traitor) is always listed last.
  - It is okay to have different roles and levels of leadership among God's people. Peter was the spokesperson. He took the lead in the early church in Jerusalem.
  - Every member of the body of Christ is equally loved and valued by God, but they don't have the same role, visibility, or prominence.

- Don't **envy** the gifts, calling, or roles of others, but be thankful for them and do the most with the opportunities you've been given.
- **Limits of Investment:** Even in the other lists, we see the same three groups of four. With the first four always being two sets of brothers: Peter and Andrew, James, and John. Three of them (Peter, James, and John) became an informal inner circle, even being described as pillars of the church (Gal 2:9). They were the only ones present at significant events in Jesus' ministry (e.g., Transfiguration, Jairus' daughter, further into the Garden of Gethsemane).
  - If Jesus, the perfect human, had to focus his investment in a limited number of people, it's safe to assume that you will be limited in your investment.
  - You can't be in everyone's inner circle, and that's okay!
  - As a church, we can be a loving family and genuine friends without being equally invested in everyone.
- **Pattern of Multiplication:** Jesus establishes the pattern of discipleship and multiplication even in this moment. Ministry cannot be limited to the time, intelligence, and giftedness of some ideal leader (cf. Moses and Jethro, Ex 18, judges over thousands, hundred, fifties, and tens). E.g., youth ministry grew with investment in 12 adults, each could invest in a similar number of kids.
  - If you think the pastors can grow the church, you're wrong. We can hold serve, we can't multiply.
- **Reality of Imperfection:** I just want to remind you that these pillars of the faith are not often who we would choose to build the church.
  - They don't have the religious, vocational, or educational credentials to get hired in any church I know.
  - The stories we have of them include episodes of faithlessness, ignorance, denial, and betrayal.
  - The people God chooses prove **his** strength, not **theirs**.

## 2. Descending the Mountain (vv. 17-19)

<sup>17</sup> And he came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, <sup>18</sup> who came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. And those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. <sup>19</sup> And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all.

**Setting of the Sermon:** There's a lot of conversation about whether the following sermon of Jesus (Sermon on the Plain) is the same as the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7). It would make sense that Jesus would teach the same content to different crowds at different times (explaining the similarities and the differences) or simply that Matthew and Luke's summaries emphasize different elements of the same message. Regardless...

- Wouldn't it be nice to stay up on the mountain at the ceremony? (E.g., St. Thomas, Caribbean vacation; suspect I'd get familiar with it too; wait until hurricane season).

**Walk Down This Mountain:** He brought his disciples down with him to the crowds. He continues his healing ministry as a precursor to his teaching them of the kingdom which he inaugurates.

- There is an inseparable link between spiritual leadership and compassionate action. Mountains are for vision and inspiration, but fruit grows in the valley. The tenets of the KoG are not lofty and abstract but impact real people's real lives in the real world!
- Leadership involves descending into the daily struggles of life to bring healing and hope.

**Jesus can't help what he is, his compassion leaves a trail.<sup>6</sup> Compassion is central to his identity.** "The cumulative testimony of the four gospels is that when Jesus Christ sees the fallenness of the world all about him, his deepest impulse, his most natural instinct, is to move toward that sin and suffering, not away from it" (Dane Ortlund).

- When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd (Matt 9:36).
- When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick (Matt 14:14).
- Jesus sees us, and has a tender heart of love for us. He knows our sin and our suffering and he cares for us.
- He is not disinterested or disconnected. He is not annoyed that you messed up again. He is not bothered that you have come asking for help again (e.g., doctor loves to see sick people).
- Throughout the Bible God sees suffering people and responds with mercy and love.

**Healing:** Healing precedes teaching.

- One of the reasons we see more miracles per capita in the gospels is because they serve a particular purpose in a particular place in time. They are evidence of the divine authority and validation of the messianic identity of Jesus (e.g., WA storying, he speaks with a word to the wind and the waves, he doesn't pray to God). The Messiah was coming, and his ministry was accompanied by the restoration of all creation (e.g., disease, tears, suffering, etc.).
- Miracles are never the end goal. They are a gift, not the giver. The call of Jesus is to *follow*, to become his disciples, and make disciples. These miracles are intended to **get your attention** and call you to respond to Jesus (e.g., siren will get your attention).
- Miracles don't exist merely to show off or fix a problem (though they have these side effects); they are meant to demonstrate Jesus and call you to follow him.
- They prove he is who he says he is, and if he is who he says he is, then you must respond. You can't ignore it, *agnosticism* is not an option.
- These healings are not the point. They set the stage so Jesus can make the point.
- "One comes to God not just to receive from him, but to respond to him" (Bock).

**New Administration:** These healings prove the new order is breaking through. Jesus is about to teach about the values of *his* kingdom.

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<sup>6</sup> "Jedi cannot help what they are. Their compassion leaves a trail" (Grand Inquisitor).

- Whenever a new administration comes (cf. President, Mayor, etc.) they bring their policy agenda, values, and staff. Or maybe think of a new coach with philosophy of training, coaching staff, playbook, etc.
- Jesus is about to flip the world's **playbook**. In his economy, the way up is down, weakness is power, and salvation is sacrifice.
- <sup>27</sup> "But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, <sup>28</sup> bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. <sup>29</sup> To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. <sup>30</sup> Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. <sup>31</sup> And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them (Lk 6:27-31).
  - Ultimately, the question becomes which Kingdom you are part of. **Are you of the kingdom of this world or the kingdom of God?**
- This new vision for life, this new agenda of the KoG is only compelling and possible if Jesus actually has the **power** to implement it. These healings prove that he can accomplish what he sets out to do.

**Audience:** One of the often overlooked things that is happening in this section of Luke is not simply that Jesus is proclaiming a new *ethic* but he is calling together a new *community*. And some interesting details sneak into this description of the crowd that surrounds Jesus: a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon.

- The crowd includes his disciples (understandable), and Jewish folks (interesting), but also those from Phoenician cities along the Mediterranean coast (completely unexpected).
  - (1) These folks are outside the immediate **geographical** reach of Jesus. His power, popularity, and preaching are gathering crowds from quite a distance. His fame is spreading beyond traditionally Jewish areas.
  - (2) These folks are outside the expected **religious** reach of Jesus. They are Gentiles! They are not part of the chosen people.
    - The plan of salvation always started with the Jews but never ended there. His salvation was always for the nations! And here we see the nations coming to him.
  - (3) These folks are proof of the **eschatological** fulfillment of Jesus. Tyre and Sidon are perennial enemies of the people of God. The King of Tyre (Ez 28) is often seen as an allegory of Satan! But there are points in the OT that describe the repentance and peace of Tyre and Sidon (and other Gentile nations) as evidence of the arrival of God's Messiah. (Is 23, Ez 28, Zech 9). The Messiah is here!

**Community:** We actually need community. But we need a community that calls us to righteousness, not self-righteousness; a community that takes us to Jesus, not affirms us in our own self-absorbed thinking.

- Here, we don't see a homogenous crowd of expected participants who fit the pre-conceived categories of Jesus followers. But we see religious and irreligious, disciples and seekers, Jews and Gentiles, urban and rural, cultural movers and shakers and country folk. In the diversity of the response, we see the transcendent power of the call of Jesus.

**We all need community** (but particularly the right kind of community).

- The lie of rabid individualism falls apart easier than a flat-pack coffee table you find on the side of the road.
  - Very, very few people just dress how they want. Fashion actually requires approval from others. Why do you want others to listen to your music or take your cinema recommendations?
  - This isn't *all* bad. We need a community to unite around. As God said, "It is not good that man should be alone" (Gen 2:18).
- But *what* we unite around and how we pursue unity matters.
  - The members of the community that Jesus builds don't seek approval simply to build themselves up. They seek to build others up. They don't share their interests just to validate their own opinions but so others can experience the joy they experience.
  - In Jesus' economy, we don't use others to build ourselves up (and especially don't tear others down to build ourselves up). We actually build ourselves up by building others up.

**Relational Unity:** I'm not sure the **diversity** of Jesus' disciples fully engages us. Even among the twelve, you have low to **middle-class** fishermen and an **upper-class** tax collector, a tax collector who would be seen as a Roman **collaborator** (the polar opposite end of the political spectrum from Simon the Zealot (a name of political movement derived from the ferocity of which its proponents opposed Roman **occupation**). The differences between Zealots and Tax Collectors would be less akin to Republicans and Democrats and more to Zionist and Free Palestine protestors. We see a wide range of temperaments described among the twelve: impulsive Peter, audacious sons of thunder, the famous doubt of Thomas, the betrayal of Judas, etc.

- When you look at the crowd Jesus gathers, you see just how diverse his following was.
  - **Galilee** was in the north, more rural with small villages and towns. It bordered Gentile regions, which made its religious observance and cultural customs less distinct. Aramaic was the primary language with a lot of Greek influence.
  - **Jerusalem** was the religious, political, and cultural center of Judea, located in the south. It was a bustling urban center, and much more strict in its religious observance. Greek influence was unavoidable but less pronounced and even the language of Hebrew would have been more common.
- For this collection of people to come together, **they must be united around the identity of Jesus and his gospel**. The same is true for us.
  - Why is unity and dealing with conflict such a recurring theme of the NT? Because the pull of sin is always toward disunity. Sin tells us that we are the center of the world and everyone must conform to our opinions.

- Most of leadership is just trying to keep people together.
- This can only happen in the power of Jesus. As soon as our opinion becomes more compelling than the gospel, we will fracture. We need clarity about the identity of Jesus and his gospel, and dependence on his power.

**Fuel for Ministry:** And he came down with them These few words (6 eng; 4 grk) indicate exactly where the power of our unity and the possibility of our ministry exists. It is only through Jesus that we can be united and serve those to whom we are called.

- You aren't the power, he is!
- I don't save anyone! I simply come in the name of Jesus. It is only as long as I'm with Jesus that I have anything to give anyone.
- He's always the one accomplishing the work.
  - If you rely on yourself, you will either fail (lose) or succeed at the wrong thing (lose). You might win people to something other than Christ and the power of the gospel!
  - Make sure you're winning people to the right thing (goes for church, pet causes, soapbox issues, political positions) or you'll make them twice as much a child of hell (Jesus' words, Matt 23:15).

## Conclusion

**Mission:** We are not the apostles (office), but we are sent ones. First, he will send out the twelve (Lk 9:1-6), then he will send out seventy-two others (Lk 10:1-12), and ultimately, he sends all of us (Matt 28:18-20) to go with the gospel.

**Descend the Mountain With Me:** We all need time with Jesus on the mountain, but ministry isn't marked by how high you climb but by how closely you walk with others in their need.

- The gospel compels us to go from the mountain to the multitude.
- He calls us to go down the mountain **with him** and use our relationships, influence, experience, and gifts to bring the healing power of the gospel to others.
- In what way do you need to lower yourself to serve someone else and share the gospel this week?