

Luke 9:1-6

Sermon: **Listen to the insignificant**

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WE ALL NEED TIME

1. (Luke 9:1-2) And He called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases. And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing.

1.1 (Matthew 10:1-2) Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every sickness. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Him.

1.2 The text tells us that Jesus called the twelve. From where did Jesus call the twelve? In fact, what did the ministry of Jesus' disciples look like, which lasted between three to five years? After Jesus' first call, did they abandon the lives they had known up to that point, or did they still, in intervals, fulfill their duties: being a father, being a husband, being a provider for their family?

1.3 In other words, were they camping for all five years, and is He now, while they are camping, calling them to draw near because He needs to tell them something? Or were they, when He called them, at home with their families where they were fulfilling the responsibilities that awaited them after returning from their travels?

1.4 Unfortunately, we do not have a clear answer in the Bible regarding many things that interest us. Perhaps I have already said this, but it is worth repeating: the Bible is not a biography of Jesus Christ. It does not contain all those moments where we can clearly see whether Jesus laughed loudly or quietly, whether He loved to dance or not, what His hobbies were, which sport He liked most, whether He was more extroverted or introverted, whether He had many friends when He was young or not. All those, and many other questions, are hidden from us.

1.5 We can only speculate from the context of Scripture what Jesus was like and what the ministry of the twelve looked like, but even then, here and there we will make mistakes — this is part of interpreting the Bible. But the most important thing, the very reason Jesus came into the world, all of that we have in the Gospels.

1.6 All right, let us return to the questions mentioned above. If I had to personally conclude what is more likely, I would say that the disciples of Jesus had breaks from their ministry.

1.7 One of the reasons is their daily exposure to Jesus' teaching and to His miracles. At times, this must have been too much for them; they needed time to process everything in their minds and in their souls. And they could only do that through breaks they had during their ministry.

1.8 Likewise, it would have been unreasonable for Jesus to demand that they immediately abandon their families in order to carry out a five-year — daily — ministry with Him. Jesus would never have asked that of them; He Himself had a family.

— In other words, He knew what it meant to be a member of a family and that every member carries a certain kind of responsibility within their community. —

1.9 With that said, we all need time to digest something that is of great importance. The entire process in which we instinctively re-examine, weigh, and repeat in our minds what we have been taught is essential for us. Continuous, intense learning that never stops cannot be good for us. As important as learning is, just as important is the process through which we gradually accept or do not accept what we have been taught.

1.10 There are so many unknowns regarding our tomorrow that today we cannot say: *"I believe in this teaching,"* at least not at the beginning. Only the course of our life, intertwined with the truth of the gospel, can show whether the teaching of Jesus Christ holds water or not. Through that same process the disciples of Jesus also had to go through, I believe. So now, Jesus calls His twelve after the break that both He and they had.

GOD THE FATHER CHOSE JESUS, NOT THE OTHER WAY AROUND

2. As a continuation of that, the text tells us that Jesus gave them authority over evil spirits, and to heal the sick.

2.1 As a lover of the Old Testament, I tried to deepen my knowledge as much as possible regarding what the relationship looked like between Yahweh and His "anointed ones" who had a literal dialogue with Him and who performed miracles in His name. And why was I interested in their relationship? Because of Jesus. Nowhere in the New Testament do we see a literally recorded dialogue between Jesus and God the Father — while in the Old Testament we do.

2.2 I will mention several examples:

1. Yahweh gives instructions to Joshua after the death of Moses. He tells him what will happen next, and encourages him to stand firm and not to fear, because He is with him just as He was with Moses.¹
2. In this event, Yahweh encourages Moses to raise his staff toward the sea. Then the sea will divide so that the Israelites can cross on its dry bed, while the Egyptians together with Pharaoh will be drowned.²
3. The prophet Samuel receives from the people a request to choose for them a king who will rule over them. Samuel did not like this, but Yahweh appears to Samuel and tells him to do as the people requested.³

2.3 As I mentioned above, I am saddened that we do not have recorded in the Gospels what Jesus and His Father talked about when He withdrew into solitude to pray. But what we do know for certain is that He is also God's "anointed." The "unique anointed One," but an anointed one like the others in the Old Testament.

2.4 And while the authors write that Jesus gave authority to the twelve, I ask myself: did they, as Israelites, understand that the authority ultimately came from God the Father? In other words, because of their knowledge of the Old Testament, did they understand that God the Father gave instructions to Jesus to do so? I believe that they did.

2.5 My point is this: although Moses raised his staff and parted the sea, although Samuel anointed the king, although Joshua went to conquer the territory of the future promised land — God is the One who gave them authority and instructions to do so.

— In the same way, if the Father had not given authority to Jesus, He would not have had the power to give His disciples authority to perform miracles. —

2.6 Why is this so important? Namely, unlike church doctrine (the Holy Trinity), where Jesus is equal to His Father, where He is just as important as His Father — I believe that the Father is the most important, and that His Son — whom He chose as His anointed — is the most important for us because the Father *chose Him to be His unique anointed One*; that is, to be the ruler over all humanity.

2.7 With that said, if we look at the relationship between Jesus and His Father through church lenses, then Jesus would not have needed to be obedient to the Father — why would He, since He is just as important as the Father? In other words, He would have the same authority as His Father, and would not need to seek His counsel or approval to do something.

— I believe this is wrong and that this is not a biblical perspective. Jesus was obedient to the Father because He knew that God chose Him, and not the other way around. —

¹ Joshua 1:1-9

² Exodus 14:15-18

³ 1 Samuel 8:1-22

2.8 Now then, why is it important that we view Jesus as a human being who was chosen to be anointed by God just as God did in the Old Testament? “Because of us” would be my short answer.

2.9 Is Jesus our way? Yes! And if He chose to be obedient, then we must also strive to be obedient.

2.10 Someone may say: *“But Danijel, God literally spoke to His anointed ones — how can we know what it means to be obedient to God when He does not communicate with us in that way?”* Yes, God directly addressed His anointed ones, but that does not mean that He does not speak to us — He most certainly speaks to us. Through His Son He speaks to us.

2.11 And every time we are faced with a life decision where we do not know what we must do, let us ask Jesus and His apostles, and we will receive God’s instructions on what we are to do. But if we believe that Jesus, as God, is equal to God the Father, we will instinctively reject the very thought of doing this — after all, He is God — He does not fully understand me, I am a human being who is vulnerable, while He is not! There lies one of the main problems with the church doctrine of the Holy Trinity, I believe.

2.12 Before we continue, I want to say this as well: I believe that one of the reasons we have recorded dialogue between God and His anointed ones is — because they themselves wrote it down. And we know that Jesus wrote nothing, so the authors of the Gospels could only record what they saw with their own eyes, or what Jesus wanted to share with them. As, for example, His dialogue with Satan — where He was alone with him.⁴

GOD THE FATHER AND HIS SON, JESUS CHRIST, CHOOSE THE INSIGNIFICANT

3. Alright, let us continue. The text tells us that He sent them to preach to the people about the Kingdom of God.

Which people exactly are we talking about? Did the apostles go to preach to both Jews and Gentiles, or only to the Jews?

3.1 In Matthew 10:5 we have the answer to that question:

“Jesus sent out the Twelve with the following instructions: ‘Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel!’”

3.2 This is the first time that Jesus does something similar to what the Pharisees also used to do. What exactly do I mean?

The Pharisees traveled through various regions of Israel and, while teaching the people (in marketplaces and synagogues), they tried to persuade them to become part of their faction — the Pharisaic movement.

The only difference is that the teachers of that movement had authority in the eyes of the people to tell them what they were supposed to do as a nation.

3.3 With that said, our priests have also had the authority for over a thousand years to tell us what we must do for God and the Church.

⁴ See sermon #21, §§1.-1.1

Who gave them that authority? God or they themselves?

I believe that, in both cases, they gave that authority to themselves — and we, as ordinary people, have blindly believed in it for centuries.

3.4 And why am I saying this? Let us return to Jesus.

Whom does He send? The insignificant in the eyes of the people.

The apostles were ordinary men: some fishermen, some merchants, some tax collectors... some zealots.

When you think about it — what a group!

Not only were they ordinary people, but some of them were even despised among the nation.

— Those are the people Jesus sends. —

3.5 I do not know whether you are familiar with the story of Gideon from the Old Testament.

Gideon was one of the insignificant in the eyes of his people. He said so himself when Yahweh called him to defeat the enemies of Israel: *“He replied, ‘Pardon me, my Lord, but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in the tribe of Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house.’”*⁵

3.6 In the text we see that God sends someone insignificant to save His people.

He has done this countless times throughout history.

3.7 Another example is King David — an ancestor of Jesus Christ — who was the youngest son in his family. When a new king was being chosen, no one, not even the prophet Samuel, thought that God would choose David.⁶

3.8 In summary, this theme runs from the Old Testament all the way into the New — where God, and likewise His Son, Jesus Christ, choose those insignificant in the eyes of men in order to save His people from some form of trouble.

THEIR PROCLAMATION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD WILL HAVE TWO OUTCOMES

4. Alright, let us continue.

4.1 **(Luke 9:3–6)** And He said to them, ‘Take nothing for the journey — neither staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not have two tunics each. Whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. And wherever they do not receive you, as you leave that town, shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.’ So they set out and went from village to village, proclaiming the gospel and healing people everywhere.

4.2 **(Matthew 10:5–15)** These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: ‘Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, proclaim: “The kingdom of heaven has come near.” Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.

⁵ Judges 6:15

⁶ 1 Samuel 16:6-7, 11-12; 1 Samuel 17:14

Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your belts, no bag for the journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor a staff, for the worker is worthy of his food.

Whatever town or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave. As you enter the house, greet it. If the house is worthy, let your peace rest upon it; if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, leave that house or town and shake the dust off your feet. Truly I tell you, it will be more bearable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the Day of Judgment than for that town.'

4.3 "Take nothing for the journey — no staff, no bread, no money..."

At first glance, it may seem as if Jesus does not want His disciples to use common sense.

It is reasonable, when we travel, to take everything we need: wallet, food, spare clothing, and so on. So why did Jesus give such instructions to His disciples?

4.4 I believe it was for this reason: Jesus wanted the disciples, during their journey, to learn that their proclamation of the Kingdom of God would result in two outcomes:

1. That those who accept their message will love them and provide everything they need to survive along the way.
2. And that those who refuse to listen will drive them away and deny them the resources necessary for life.

4.5 And when the disciples experienced rejection because of the message of the Kingdom of God, it came as a shock to them.

Why a shock? Let us try to step into their shoes and imagine their expectations:

"We are going to preach to our own people about the coming of the Messiah. Every Jew — our brother — has been taught from birth about the Messiah and the blessing He will bring. Why would anyone reject such wonderful news, even if it comes from us? On top of that, we will perform miracles!"

4.6 They surely believed that no one would reject them now that they were performing miracles.

They believed that the whole nation would understand that they had been sent by God.

But it was not so. They were rejected. They were afraid they would have no food for tomorrow, afraid they would freeze while sleeping outdoors after being driven out of a town.

4.7 That is why it was a shock — they could not believe that their own people could be so hard-hearted. And this is exactly what Jesus wanted to teach them — and also us who call ourselves His disciples.

4.8 Deep inside, all of us believe that our people, our friends, and our family will never reject us when we proclaim that we love Christ and His gospel.

We believe that they, of all people, will come to our aid and love us no matter how much our message embarrasses them before others. We believe they will not cause us trouble even though we carry the gospel.

4.9 But they will. Our message hurts.

The message of Christ tears the human soul apart — it exposes it for what it truly is.

Then our loved ones may become hostile toward us, which has direct consequences for our lives.

4.10 Until we experience what the apostles experienced, we deeply believe that our loved ones would never do such a thing to us.

It was precisely this belief that Jesus wanted to break in His apostles.

In other words, He was preparing them for what awaited them in the future — and He prepares us so that the same may not come as a surprise.

4.11 Of course, in all of this there is also the other side — the side that brings comfort:

there are also those who will love us because of our message.

They will become our greatest blessing here and now — until the day comes when we behold Jesus Christ, our King.

HE DOES NOT ASK THAT OF US

5 With that said, I believe that Jesus wanted to teach His disciples another very important thing.

5.1 Read Luke 12:22–32 for yourselves. I believe that in this event Jesus teaches the people that God has always taken care of His people.

5.2 At the very end of the text Jesus says: *“Seek the kingdom of heaven, and these things will be added to you.”*

5.3 By “added” He means everything a person needs for life: food, clothing, etc.

5.4 Now let us apply Jesus’ teaching to the event where He sends His apostles on a missionary journey.

5.5 The apostles sought and preached the kingdom of God during their first missionary journey, and through the people God made sure they had lodging and food while they preached and performed miracles.

— Jesus’ teaching was literally fulfilled in the lives of the apostles as they went to the lost sheep of Israel. —

SUPERFICIAL INTERPRETATION AND PITFALLS

6. With that said, there is always a danger if we interpret an event superficially. That is why I want to share a few more thoughts with you.

6.1 Many teachers throughout history claim: “These are the true followers of Jesus Christ — this is what a disciple who wants to serve God looks like. He does not worry about what he will eat or drink. Whoever follows this, God will give him everything he needs for life.”

6.2 I can partially agree with that statement.

Why? We must keep in mind that this is an *isolated event*, when Jesus sent His disciples in a special way.

6.3 Later, before He was handed over to the chief priests, Jesus said to His disciples:

“When I sent you without a purse, bag, or sandals, did you lack anything?”

“Nothing,” they answered. “But now,” He said to them, “whoever has a purse, let him take it, and likewise a bag! And whoever has no sword, let him sell his cloak and buy one!”⁷

6.4 The text clearly shows that Jesus encouraged the disciples to use the reason that God had given them. Later they used it in order to care for themselves and others during their ministry.

6.5 This tells us that they planned where, when, and how they would take the next step.

In other words, Jesus did not say in chapter 12 of Luke: “*Do not worry at all.*”

He said: “*Do not worry anxiously.*”

6.6 That is why I partially agree with those teachers — their message can be misleading.

If interpreted as “Do not worry at all,” it can suggest that we have the right to stop using reason, that we can leave everything behind simply because God asks that of us.

6.7 In my opinion, such an attitude is dangerous and irrational. Selfish decisions can arise from it, because it ignores the responsibility we have toward the people around us.

6.8 I know a man who, because of a similar belief, sent his sick mother to a care home.

A mother who cared for him and his family all her life — cooked, washed, cleaned — now asked for help from her son and his wife.

But they sadly said in their hearts: “*We cannot do this. God has primarily called us to serve the church (to seek the kingdom of God), and that is the most important thing. Dear mother, you are going to a home, even though you beg us not to.*”

6.9 In other words, motivated by selfishness, they abandoned reason and justified their action by misinterpreting Jesus’ words: “Seek first the kingdom of God.”

Sadly, they chose passivity toward their mother, even though at the same time they could have responsibly represented God’s image, seeking the kingdom of God through love and responsibility toward those close to them.

6.10 A disaster. God never asks us to abandon the responsibilities we have as a husband, as a son, as a wife, as a grandfather, as a grandmother, as a good neighbor, as a good worker, or as a good employer. God does not ask us to stop caring about how we will earn money, or how we will plant crops in the garden so that we have food for the season. No — He does not ask that of us!

6.11 But He does ask this — He wants us to seek Him first, and if we seek Him, it will be seen in the fruits of our lives which are grounded in the awareness that we carry responsibility before Him first and foremost.

⁷ Luke 22:35-36

6.12 I see myself and my life in Jesus' teaching. Through the course of my illness, I have learned not to worry anxiously about what tomorrow will bring. My present peace is found in seeking the kingdom of God. But that does not mean that I stopped living — it does not mean that I stopped caring for my family, the household bills, my work, etc.

LISTEN TO THE INSIGNIFICANT

7. All right, let us continue. It is worth repeating — who are the lost sheep that Jesus mentions in the text? If you have been with me from the beginning of the Gospel of Luke, then you know that the lost sheep are the people of Israel. And why are they lost? Throughout all my sermons I have slowly and thoroughly explained why, so if you have not been with me from the beginning, I encourage you to do so.

7.1 "Freely you received, freely give." Jesus does not want the disciples, during their journey, to forget who gave them authority. Because if they forget for even a second, they will begin deciding who should receive healing and who should not.

7.2 It is quite possible that when they healed someone, and afterward told him the message of the kingdom, that person then left them. And if the apostles began watching who listens to the message and who does not, they would begin deciding who would receive the blessing of healing and who would not. In other words, they would take authority for themselves, and by doing so would stop promoting a merciful God — and Jesus absolutely does not want that to happen.

7.3 In the same way, during that time there were self-proclaimed healers (sorcerers) who took money from the people for their services. Jesus does not want His disciples to be viewed among the people as sorcerers who take money for what they do.

7.4 All right, let us continue. "And wherever they do not receive you, as you leave that town, shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them." Through His instructions, Jesus indicates that some will receive them because of the message while others will not. Those who do not listen to their message, Jesus commands them to shake the dust off their sandals before them.

7.5 A strange act, isn't it? Actually, it is not. In those days every Jew, when traveling through pagan cities, after returning home to Israel, at the very border where he stopped walking on pagan soil, would shake the dust off his sandals. And why would he do that? By that act he wanted to show himself, his people, and also the pagans, that everything unclean is left behind him. In other words, when he did that, he indirectly told the pagans: *"You do not know our God Yahweh — you do not belong to Him!"*

7.6 With that said, I believe that Jesus applies this common custom and tells His disciples: *"Do the same to those who do not listen to you. Shake the dust off your sandals in order to indirectly show them through that act that they are no better than pagans. In fact, they are the same as pagans — they are disobedient to the one true God. If they do not listen to you, then they are not true Jews. Meaning, even if their father and mother are Jews, it means nothing. A true Jew will listen to your message."*

7.7 Let us slowly move toward the end. “Truly I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city.”

7.8 Why will it be easier for Sodom and Gomorrah on the Day of Judgment than for that city?

7.9 If we have read the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, then we know how morally corrupt the people in those regions were.⁸

7.10 How is it possible that the cities which refuse to listen to the apostles will face a harsher judgment than Sodom and Gomorrah? The answer is simple — only the people of Israel throughout history received the complete revelation of who God is and why He created this reality.

7.11 Others received only drop by drop; the people of Israel received an entire lake of knowledge. And that is why they have no right to say that they did not understand, that they did not know, that they were not informed, that they were not taught or instructed, etc. My statement stands shoulder to shoulder with Jesus’ statement: *“From everyone who has been given much, much will be required.”*

— The Israelites received the most, and therefore their punishment will be greater than anyone else’s. —

7.12 Furthermore, the text shows that the punishment on the Day of Judgment will be “just,” so I ask the church: where does the doctrine of eternal hell fit into this — how can eternal hell be a just outcome? Where is the logic in your doctrine as you read this text?

7.13 Finally, let us listen to the insignificant, especially those in whom you see the life of being born from above. Do not reject them simply because they do not wear a badge on their chest: priest, pastor, reverend. They are somewhere out there, close to you — please, listen to the insignificant!

⁸ Genesis 18:20-21; 13:13; 19:4-5