

# Luke

## The Gospel for Everyone

Study 17 | Luke 9:18-22

### News and Needs

#### *Upcoming Events:*

- Newly Formatted Sunday School Classes - Jan. 10<sup>th</sup>, City Living. Jan. 17<sup>th</sup>, Praying with the Church. Please be sure to mention these classes to your groups and please make an effort to lead the way by attending as Group Leaders.
- Introduction to Park Slope Seminar - Jan. 30<sup>th</sup>, 9AM-12PM, PSPC office, coffee and bagels provided. Please inform those in your group who are new or have not yet joined PSPC that this seminar is an excellent way to find out more about who we are as a church and is also required should they decide to join PSPC. We will knock out the entire seminar in this one sitting rather than 5 weeks during the Sunday School hour.
- Ministry Leaders Meeting - Jan. 21<sup>st</sup>, 7:30PM-9:15PM, church office

#### *Opportunities to Serve:*

- John Jay Saturday Tutoring - Jan. 16<sup>th</sup>, 10AM-1PM. Please remind tutors that this is coming up. Also, if anyone is interested in being certified to tutor, they can contact [briansteadman@parkslopechurch.com](mailto:briansteadman@parkslopechurch.com)

### *“Seeing Jesus”*

#### **1. Why did the crowds have so many opinions about Jesus’ identity? Why were they so confused? Who do people today say Jesus is? Why are there so many opinions?**

The crowds have so many opinions because they have had precedent set for what prophets and kings looked like. They also have expectations for a new kind of prophet and king to come, a greater one than even Moses, Elijah, or David. They also have covenant promises from God, given centuries ago, that this great Prophet King would come and bring salvation to God's people. Many of those promises were summarized for us in the songs that Mary, Zechariah, and Simeon sang during the events surrounding John and Jesus' births.

Throughout Luke's gospel, most people coming into contact with Jesus and his ministry have a hard time putting their expectations of a Prophet King and what they see and hear from Jesus together. They are confused for a variety of reasons. For one, there is a delay between Jesus being called to his vocation and his vocation being realized and recognized. Jesus' understood his calling as young as 12 years old, maybe earlier, and his calling was dramatically confirmed at his baptism. Yet, Jesus just doesn't come onto the scene in his 30s saying, "Hey everybody! I'm the Messiah!" He engages a strange public career that takes a lot of time before his vocation is to be truly understood.

Second, their expectations while based upon truth, are skewed in many ways. Their expectations are also very wrong in many ways. They have misinterpreted or ignored many of the covenant promises of old. Their hopes and visions for this Prophet King are also way too small. So when Jesus comes along, he looks like their expectations, but in so many ways he completely defies their expectations. And he does so very intentionally because he has to reshape those expectations. He has to reshape God's people entirely. They have to be reshaped, or else they will not submit to God's true Prophet King and the kingdom that he is bringing among them now.

People had many opinions in their attempts to figure out who this strange figure, Jesus, truly was. Today, people still hold many opinions in trying to figure out who Jesus truly is. The reason then is still true today, people have so many opinions because Jesus demands allegiance to him and him alone as King and Savior. And that threatens us. We have expectations for who we want Jesus to be, and Jesus will not fit into any of them. He refuses to do so. We would like for him to be a good teacher of love and peace. We would like for

him to be a great moral example to follow. We would like for him to be our good luck charm, generally bringing a bit of good fortune our way. We would like for him to be our emergency back up plan when we exhaust our own resources of self-sufficiency. We make Jesus to be any number of things, because we resist bowing the knee to him as King and Savior. We refuse submit or agendas to his mission of bringing his kingdom to bear for the blessing of not just our own little clan, but the entire world.

And for many, the claims of Jesus to be the one true King and Savior are just too much. So we have to form other kinds of opinions about him. He was a complete fraud. A deceiver of people both then and today. Maybe he was a great man of love and peace, but ultimately he was a lunatic. Or perhaps he was relevant to the 1<sup>st</sup> century, but he's irrelevant to the 21<sup>st</sup>. There are many opinions because Jesus poses the question to all mankind, "Who do you say that I am?" There can be only one answer.

Consider the commentary of N.T. Wright:

"Jesus' swift movement, from asking who they think he is to summoning them to follow him even to the death, shows clearly enough that we cannot separate thinking from action in the Christian faith. As Jesus said earlier, it's not use saying 'Lord, Lord,' if you don't do what he says. Jesus' identity and his vocation are tied so tightly together that if you want to have anything to do with him you have to take the whole package or nothing at all. There are no half measures in the kingdom of God."

## **2. Why is it important that Jesus asks the disciples plainly who they thought he was? What all is involved in Peter's answer: "the Christ of God"? Why is Peter the one to answer, and how does he get it right?**

N.T. Wright:

"Prophet he certainly was; but he was not simply pointing to God's kingdom some way off in the future, he was causing it to appear before people's eyes, and was setting into motion the events through which it would become firmly established. And sooner or later he had to put the question to the disciples. They marked themselves out from the crowd by piercing the disguise; even though Jesus wasn't doing everything they had expected a Messiah to do, the combination of authority, power, insight and fulfillment of the scriptures that they had seen in him was too potent to mean anything else. To have called them, as the deeply symbolic Twelve, was important too; but anyone could have done that, and been mistaken. To have equipped them to go out and do what he was doing was something else again. Their own identity had come to depend on his, and there was only one answer they could give: You're the Messiah, God's anointed king.

If we have understood Luke's story so far, with its strong hints of opposition from the Pharisees on the one hand and Herod on the other, it will come as no surprise that Jesus at once tells not just the Twelve but anyone who wants to follow him there is a dark and dangerous time ahead. The world is being turned upside down, and anyone who wants to come through and be present when God's kingdom appears will have to be prepared to be turned upside down and inside out with it. Despite what many well-meaning evangelists and preachers have said, Jesus didn't come with the message that if we followed him we would have an easy life, with everything happening exactly as we would like it. Just the reverse. To save your life, you have to lose it. To avoid having the 'son of man' be ashamed of you, you have to acknowledge him. In other words, when the Messiah is installed as judge of God's world, which was a central

part of Jewish expectation, then only those who have been prepared to follow him when it was dangerous and shameful to do so will be acknowledged by him in return."

It is fitting that Peter is the one to answer that Jesus must be God's chosen King. Because it is Peter to whom Jesus directly addresses that the keys of the kingdom will be entrusted to and upon him will Jesus build his Church. Jesus addresses Peter, but Peter represents and embodies all who Jesus will carry on his mission through. Not Peter alone, but all the apostles. And not just the apostles, but all Jesus' disciples who to come will follow Jesus as King. We can follow Jesus' commitment to carry on God's redemptive mission through the Church in the life of Peter. Peter denies the Lord three times in shame. Peter runs in hope to the empty tomb. Peter experiences the resurrected Jesus' forgiveness "three times" on the sea shore. Peter preaches boldly by the Holy Spirit's power on the day of Pentecost. Peter will follow Jesus when it is dangerous and shameful to do so. All the way to his own death on a cross, nailed upside down as historical accounts tell us.

**3. Who do you say Jesus is in our world today? With your lips and in your life? How does the answer given by your church community help you when your own confession gets confused?**

Who do we confess Jesus to be by our words and our actions? Not in giving the right answers when asked or in your Bible Study. But truly, who do we confess him to be with how we speak in our day to day life? Who do we confess him to be by the way we treat our neighbors? Who do we confess him to be in our marriages? Our parenting? Our work ethics? Who do we confess Jesus to be in how we treat the poor, the marginalized, the weak, the foreign in our communities?

Thankfully, we do not make this confession alone. We have the body of Christ, his Church, there to remind us that Jesus is God's chosen King. We see it in the lives of our brothers and sisters in Christ. We hear it in their words. And we confess it rightly every Lord's Day in gathered worship. With our bodies, our tongues, our minds, our hearts, our will we confess in worship that Jesus is truly God's chosen King who is bringing his kingdom to bear in this world.

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