

Date: February 14, 2021
Series: *A First Century Physician Introduces the Cure*
Title: *Sent, Empowered, Noticed*
Text: Luke 9:1-17
Preacher: Mark Adams

This week I read the story of a Pharmacist Mate named Wheller Lipes. Lipes served on a submarine that was patrolling the Pacific during WW2. One of his crewmates was stricken with acute appendicitis and was near death. The closest surgeon was thousands of miles away.

Lipes was the only “health professional” on board and he watched as his shipmate’s temperature rose to 106 degrees. He realized the only hope was an operation. Lipes had observed surgeons perform an appendectomy many times so, with the sailor’s consent, it was decided that Lipes would lead a surgical team. The patient was stretched out on a table in the wardroom, beneath a floodlight. Lipes and other sailors, none of them medically trained, dressed in reversed pajama tops, and masked their faces with gauze.

The crew stood by on the diving planes to keep the sub steady. The cook boiled water for sterilizing. A tea strainer served as an antiseptic cone. A broken-handled scalpel was the operating instrument. Alcohol drained from the torpedoes was the antiseptic. Bent tablespoons served as retractors to keep the incision open.

It took Lipes twenty minutes to find the appendix. Two and a half hours later, the last catgut stitch was sewn just as the last drop of ether gave out.

Well, the patient not only survived. Thirteen days later he was back at work. It was a great accomplishment, greater than the appendectomies done by trained surgeons--not because it was DONE better---it certainly wasn’t---no---it was greater because an unskilled shipmate performed the surgery.

This story helps me understand a promise the Great Physician made shortly before He left this earth. In the Upper Room He told His first followers ***“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do--- because I go to the Father.”*** (John 14:12 NASB)

The apostles, the church---all Christians---including you and me, do greater works than Jesus, because of who we are: frail, sinful human instruments guided and empowered by the Spirit of Almighty-God. With this morning’s text we come to the time when Jesus’ first followers first experienced this “greater works” empowering. Take your Bibles and turn to Luke 9. We’ll be reading verses 1-17 and as we do, I would ask if you are able, that you stand in respect for God’s Word as it is read.

- 1 - Summoning the Twelve, He gave them power and authority over all the demons, and power to heal diseases.**
- 2 - Then He sent them to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.**
- 3 - "Take nothing for the road," He told them, "no walking stick, no traveling bag, no bread, no money; and don't take an extra shirt.**
- 4 - Whatever house you enter, stay there and leave from there.**
- 5 - If they do not welcome you, when you leave that town, shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them."**
- 6 - So they went out and traveled from village to village, proclaiming the good news and healing everywhere.**
- 7 - Herod the tetrarch heard about everything that was going on. He was perplexed, because some said that John had been raised from the dead,**
- 8 - some that Elijah had appeared, and others that one of the ancient prophets had risen.**
- 9 - "I beheaded John," Herod said, "but Who is this I hear such things about?" And he wanted to see Him.**
- 10 - When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus all that they had done. He took them along and withdrew privately to a town called Bethsaida.**
- 11 - When the crowds found out, they followed Him. He welcomed them, spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and cured those who needed healing.**
- 12 - Late in the day, the Twelve approached and said to Him, "Send the crowd away, so they can go into the surrounding villages and countryside to find food and lodging, because we are in a deserted place here."**
- 13 - "You give them something to eat," He told them. "We have no more than five loaves and two fish," they said, "unless we go and buy food for all these people." 14 - (For about 5,000 men were there.) Then He told His disciples, "Have them sit down in groups of about 50 each."**
- 15 - They did so, and had them all sit down.**
- 16 - Then He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to Heaven, He blessed and broke them. He kept giving them to the disciples to set before the crowd.**
- 17 - Everyone ate and was filled. Then they picked up 12 baskets of leftover pieces.**

There are three principles I want us to note in this familiar story; principles we must remember if we are to share the CURE.

(1) We have been sent.

Sharing the CURE is our God-given job. It's your job. It's my job. We have been sent to do it in the same way the first disciples were sent out in this story. Look at verses 1 and 6.

Luke says, **"He sent them to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. So, they went out and traveled from village to village, proclaiming the good news and healing everywhere."**

Jesus' Galilean ministry is coming to an end. Soon He will move south into the region around Jerusalem. And as these days came to an end Jesus SENT His first followers on a preaching tour;

their very first hands-on experience of “fishing for men.” It was a dress rehearsal for the post-Pentecost ministry of the twelve; sort of a “*mission-trip scrimmage*.” Understand, up until this point, Jesus had done all the ministering and all the teaching.

- The twelve brought people to be healed, and Jesus touched their diseased bodies.
- The twelve took care of Jesus’ physical needs and arranged the details of His travel so He could concentrate on teaching.
- The Twelve observed, listened, questioned, and learned, but Jesus instructed.
- The Twelve helped contain demonized individuals, but Jesus cast out the spirits.

Now, all that would change. The time had come for Jesus’ trainees or interns to put their learning into practice. So, Jesus called them together and charged them with their first mission. They were to go out and replicate His ministry of proclaiming the Kingdom of God. And they were to SHOW or PROVE that the Kingdom of God had come on earth by doing God-sized things---casting out demons and healing diseases—just as they had seen Jesus do.

Well, as I said, we too have been sent. We are not just to KNOW Jesus; we are not just to EXPERIENCE THE CURE; no, once we are healed, we are sent out. We are sent to tell others the good news of the Gospel so that they too can come to know God. Each of us who have responded to God’s great love are to GO into all the world. Each of us are ordained, commissioned, and SENT on the same kind of mission. It’s as I said in the Vision Sermon; we are all commissioned as GPA’s---Great Physician Assistants---sent out to share the cure. As James Emory White puts it, “*When it comes to telling lost people about Jesus, we’re the APP for that.*”

And we see another example of this sending later in our text when the disciples were confronted with 5,000 hungry men and probably twice as many hungry women and children. Jesus said to them, “***You give them something to eat.***” (vs 13) Our Lord told those twelve men to fill 15,000 empty stomachs. We have the same orders. Like Lipes on that sub, it’s OUR job to help the people in this world who are in need. It’s our job to both share and SHOW the Gospel. We are indeed the “app for that.” It’s like the person who said, “*I wondered why someone didn’t do something---and then I realized I’m someone.*” Following Jesus is being that SOMEONE; it’s going as our Lord commanded. It’s DOING ministry. It’s helping the hungry. It’s sharing the gospel. It’s moving marbles.

James says that “***faith without works is dead***” and one of the saddest proofs of a dead faith is a Christian who doesn’t obey our Lord and GO and doesn’t DO anything to lead people to Jesus. Christianity is NOT a spectator sport!

This week I read about a prize-winning photojournalist who confessed that like other news photographers, he pretty-much remains a spectator to record the misfortune of others.

As an example, he shared of a time he took pictures of a woman drowning. He said, *“I was sent out on an assignment from when I was working for the Lawrence Eagle-Tribune. They wanted pictures [of a coastal storm], so I went out to nearby Plum Island. [I] walked out on the beach, and there was this one woman standing by the ocean looking out. She was on the shore’s edge and huge waves crashing in front of her. She was drinking a beer. A split second after I took this picture a wave came in, hit the embankment below her feet, knocked the sand out, and she went sliding into the water. I was probably at least 50 feet away from her, shooting with a telephoto lens. She was in the water either in shock or drunk or whatever. I thought about, okay, am I going to make a rescue? I already got the shot I need. I turned around, and 100 feet behind me there was a lifeguard. So, I continued to photograph the sequence. The lifeguard rushed past me to her. [He] was ready to reach out and grab her and pull her to safety. But at the last second something stopped him. It was this huge wave that was about to crash on top of this helpless woman. It was 20 feet high or more. The wave hit and she was gone. The sequence of pictures I took received quite a bit of attention, and a lot of criticism came into the Lawrence Eagle-Tribune about their photographer---me---who stood there and watched someone drown in the ocean while he just continued to take pictures.”*

Later in the interview the photographer admits that he could have made a difference, but instead he chose to observe and take pictures. Too many believers are like this photographer: they just watch while people go through life slipping further and further from God.

Have you ever SEEN a need but only watched? Has God ever given you an opening to tell someone about His great love but you did nothing?

If your house is like ours we have two categories of towels. One is the “guest towel.” Those are the towels that are hung in bathrooms but are not meant to be used except by guests. They hang there just in case someone stops by and needs to use the facility. They are good-looking towels, usually with fancy embroidery. They are unstained and folded perfectly. Their job is to LOOK good.

And then there’s the OTHER category of towel; the ones that are used over and over and over again. Well, following Christ is not being a “guest towel.” We are not to hang there and look good. We are to be more like the regular hand towels: the ones that are frayed and stained from use. We have been sent to work. God has sent us to clean sinners by sharing the Gospel; the truth that our sins can be washed away.

Now, if this first point concerns you; have no fear for not only have we been sent...

(2) **We have been empowered.**

God gives us the insights, the wisdom, the power, the resources to do what He has sent us to do. And we see that in our text. I mean, Jesus didn’t just SEND the Twelve out with the cure: He EMPOWERED them to go. In verse 1 Luke says that to prepare the twelve for this first ever mission trip Jesus delegated to them His divine “**power**” and His divine “**authority**.” These two

terms sound similar, but they are different. The first word, “*dynamis*” in the Greek — “*power*” in English — is the divine ability to accomplish the impossible. Jesus infused the Twelve with this kind of power.

Luke tells us our Lord gave them capabilities they did not have on their own: the power to do miracles. Imagine how exciting that must have been! The second word is “*exousia*” in the Greek— “*authority*” in English—and it is a divine mandate to carry out the Lord’s mission. So, He gave them POWER and the AUTHORITY to use it.

An example of these two concepts is a police officer manning a speed trap. That radar gun gives him the power to see how fast we are going. But the policeman also wields AUTHORITY delegated to him by the city or county or state. He lacks the power to stop a car physically. Two thousand pounds of metal going forty-five miles per hour would kill him instantly. But, by merely holding out his hand, he stops cars by command. If you’ve ever been caught in a speed trap where a policeman stepped out in front of you commanding you to stop, you know what I mean. We stop and we obey his authoritative commands because that uniform and badge tells us that if we don’t we will suffer the consequences brought on by the government that authorized him.

Well, that’s a picture of what Jesus did for the disciples. He gave them the POWER and the AUTHORITY to speak and heal in His place. This should remind us that when we join God in seeking the lost---when He sends US on our own mission like when He tells us to help someone who is hurting or when He tells us to share the Gospel with a friend or neighbor—or whatever-- -when God commands us to GO in His name, we have the same power and authority at our disposal.

Well, with this power and authority the Twelve did exactly as they were told. According to Mark’s gospel, the men worked in pairs. Six teams of two traveled all over Galilee preaching and healing, taking nothing with them—relying on God to empower them---and provide for their every need. Luke implies that this was an extended time of travel, requiring several weeks or perhaps even months.

When the disciples returned, they very quickly found themselves and Jesus surrounded by a multitude. They didn’t get on a plane and fly home like we do when a mission trip ends. No--- they walked---so perhaps crowds of people who had heard of their preaching and healing followed them home and others in the area spread the word that Jesus was there. In any case, they went from one exhausting mission trip to another! In his Gospel, Mark puts it this way, ***“Because so many people were coming and going that Jesus and His disciples did not even have a chance to EAT, Jesus said to them. ‘Come with Me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.’”*** (Mark 6:31)

Vance Havner voiced the way the disciples must have responded. In his opinion they said, *“We will come apart with You Jesus—because if we don’t come apart and rest, we’ll just come apart.”* In short, the apostles were being *“peopled to death,”* by those who had experienced

their great ministries. The press was so great that they could not find time for a snack! I can't help but think of some of the medical mission trips to the D. R. that we have been on where the clinic was so crowded we had to sneak off to grab a bite of lunch. Well, this was wonderful but also draining for the already exhausted Twelve.

And let's be honest, ministry can be like that. Doing what we have been sent to do can be physically and emotionally draining. At any rate, the disciples needed some time to themselves. And getting away like this to rest and be with Jesus was important because as I said only one year remained before Calvary and Jesus had much to teach His followers in that time. Plus, Jesus Himself needed rest. The disciples ALSO needed time to debrief with Jesus to share their mission trip experiences. I imagine they had tons of questions that only He could answer—so they left the crowd, got in a boat, and headed for a remote part of the shoreline—a hilly region near Bethsaida.

Well, it wasn't long after Jesus and His crew beached the boat, climbed up the hillside and began their little retreat. It wasn't long before they looked and saw from the dust cloud on the horizon that the multitude had followed them—walking nine miles around the top of the lake. They had apparently watched to see where they were going and then headed off in pursuit. I mean, these people were persistent—almost “paparazzi persistent.” Hundreds more from the lakeshore hamlets they passed probably joined them, calling out to their friends to come along as well—so that finally thousands converged on the apostles' retreat site in noisy, jostling expectation. So much for some time away!

Now—how do you think the disciples felt when they saw the crowd? I think they must have felt resentful. Perhaps there was some complaining. *“We're exhausted! We've been going non-stop for weeks now! We need a break!!!!”* But that's not how Jesus responded! Luke reports: ***“He welcomed [the multitude] and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing.”***

All this went on for hours. Then, as the sun was beginning to set verse 12 says, ***“Late in the afternoon the Twelve came to Him and said, ‘Send the crowd away so they can go to the surrounding villages and countryside and find food and lodging, because we are in a remote place here.’”*** Jesus replied, ***‘You give them something to eat.’”***

In my mind, it's as if Jesus said, *“You've been doing miracles for several weeks now—let's see what you've learned about My power.”* And apparently, the things they learned didn't stick because their response showed they were looking at the problem from a human-power standpoint. They said, ***“We have only five loaves of bread and two fish—unless we go and buy food for all this crowd.”*** And it was quite a crowd—5,000 men—which means the total was closer to 15,000. Well, Jesus had them sit the people in groups of about fifty each. Literally the Greek says that they sat down in ***“garden beds.”*** And on the green grass of that hillside, groups of fifty people in their colored clothes must have looked like lots of beautiful beds of flowers.

Then, Jesus lifted His eyes to Heaven and probably gave the traditional blessing that is preserved in the Mishnah: ***“Blessed be You, O Lord our God, King of the world, Who causes bread to come forth from the earth.”*** This would have been followed by a thunderous 15,000 voice ***“AMEN!”*** Then Jesus took the bread and the fishes from the little boy’s lunch and broke it into pieces. The Greek literally says, ***“He kept giving” the pieces to the disciples.*** Alexander MacClaren said, *“Jesus kept producing the bread and fish in His hands by the supernatural power of God. The pieces grew under His touch and the disciples always found His hands full when they came back with their own empty.”* Jesus kept creating tons of barley cakes and fish between the palms of His hands. For hours He multiplied the food and passed the abundance to His team of disciples who distributed it to the groups of people sitting on the hillside.

And if you doubt this miracle—which by the way is the only miracle of Jesus that appears in all four Gospels---if you doubt that it happened remember, the Creator Who created the entire universe from nothing, would have had no trouble creating enough food to fill 15,000 stomachs from the lunch of a little boy. And that’s what He did. In fact, the leftovers filled twelve baskets.

By the way, if you need a miracle, this is a good pattern to follow. Take the resources you have—even if they’re embarrassingly small, like that little boy’s lunch—and offer them up to God. See what He does. Maybe your marriage is hanging by a thread. Give that thread to God. He will strengthen it and multiply it. He can take the feelings you have for your spouse, even if they are not much, and multiply them until you have a love you never imagined.

Maybe your finances are in a mess. Give God that mess and you’ll see He is infinitely more skilled than any CPA when it comes to balancing your checkbook. Are you facing some challenge in school or at work as you seek to do God’s will? Take what you have to God and ask for His help. He will give it. God is a God of miracles. He has the power to multiply whatever is given to Him. He can heal broken marriages, broken families, broken lives, wounded hearts—whatever. When you feel the situation is hopeless, God can and will help. But the main point here is that God empowers us to do His will. He enables us to do the things He sends us to do---things we could NEVER do on our own.

This week I read that the famous pastor, Charles Hadden Spurgeon often worked 18 hours a day. The explorer and missionary David Livingstone once asked him, *“How do you manage to do two men’s work in a single day?”* Spurgeon replied, *“You have forgotten that there are two of us.”*

When it comes to doing the work of the Gospel, we can all say that God is with us---helping us---empowering us. As the anonymous poet put it:

*Yesterday, God helped me.
Today He’ll do the same.
How long will this continue?
Forever---praise His name!*

So, we have been sent.

We have been empowered.

Here's the last principle.

(3) We have been noticed.

When we do things that only God can do---the world pays attention. This is why that crowd of people followed Jesus and the disciples to Bethsaida. And they aren't the only ones who notice what people empowered by God can do. Look at verses 7-9: ***Herod the tetrarch heard about everything that was going on. He was perplexed, because some said that John had been raised from the dead---some that Elijah had appeared, and others that one of the ancient prophets had risen. "I beheaded John," Herod said, "but Who is this I hear such things about?" And he wanted to see Him.***

I'm reminded of times Kevin has reported that when he took our teens on a World Changer project, the local media saw what was going on and reported on it. A couple hundred teens working on the homes of the under-resourced is newsworthy.

When little guys do big things---people perk up. They notice.

Last week the world noticed something amazing on Wall Street with what happened to the stock of an ailing company called *GameStop*. Now---I am not well-versed in the stock market but I do know that the most popular way of making money with stocks is to buy low and sell high---but it's also possible to make money when a stock goes down. This is called "shorting" a stock; basically, you bet that the company's stock will fall. It works great unless the price of the stock goes up.

Now, GameStop wasn't valued because people don't buy video games in a physical store anymore. That led hedge funds to try and make money by betting on GameStop stock---and they lost---big. You see, little guys---people who use Reddit---encouraged each other to buy shares in GameStop---pushing the value of the stock way up. And it worked. This stock that cost \$6 a share only four months ago hit \$469 at one point last week. CBS News business analyst Jill Schlesinger said, *"It went bananas---more than 130% on a single day. You don't see things like that on Wall Street"*. Pretty soon, some of the Reddit investors had made millions on paper---and the hedge funds that had bet on the stock price falling were in desperate trouble. One of them, Melvin Capital, had to borrow almost \$3 billion to cover its GameStop short. The internet went crazy. The little guy had beaten the big guys. One Reddit little guy said, *"There was this sense of, 'Hoo wow, look what we've done. We just knocked over a huge hedge fund. And we're just a bunch of no-nothings, amateurs!'"* I saw a meme that said, *"These Reddit investors need to stop what they are doing. A lot of people who own a lot of boats are really hurting."*

I'm not going to talk about whether or not what Reddit investors did was ethical---my point is--- when little guys do big things---the world pays attention. When we do things that can only be explained by the indwelling POWER of God, the same thing happens. People who realize their need for God come---like Jairus and that woman with the issue of blood.

LET'S PRAY