

## **Divine Summons: My Part in God's Plan**

Luke 9:1-9

I'm sure most of us have received a summons to report for jury duty and were probably not jumping for joy when we did. A jury summons is different than an invitation to, for example, a birthday party or a baby shower. An invitation to a child's birthday party doesn't have the same authority or obligation connected to it as a jury summons.

A Jury duty summons is not a request for volunteers. Part of living in a free society is that every citizen must be willing to participate in the governmental and judicial systems that help keep it free. Jurors who fail to show adequate cause for their absence from jury duty may have to pay a fine, and can be imprisoned or ordered to perform community service.

Besides the authority behind a jury summons, as citizens of a free society, we ought to have a sense of responsibility to perform our civic duty when called upon.

Now if you're saved, if you have received the redemption found in Christ, you have dual citizenship. You're not only a citizen of this country, you're a citizen of heaven. As such, you not only have a general call upon your life to represent King Jesus on earth, but you also will be summoned by Him in very specific ways to serve His cause.

All through the ages, God has done extraordinary works through ordinary people because they heard His specific summons and set out in His power to accomplish it.

I want to submit to you that although God has very specific assignments for each of us, not all Christians hear His summons, let alone fulfill it. Many believers are content to just go through the motions of religious activity without a strong sense of calling to a specific role or purpose that they must fulfill.

Why is it that some professing Christians seem to just be going through the motions of religious activities while others are notably driven by a divine summons?

**Main idea:** Close followers of Jesus hear His summons, set out to obey His call, and experience His power to bring hope and healing to a broken world.

This morning we are going to examine how Jesus called His disciples and used them to bring freedom and healing to the bound and broken.

## **1. Jesus summoned His intimate disciples to know His presence and plans.**

First, Jesus summoned His intimate disciples to know His presence and plans.

*“And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases,” Luke 9:1*

It’s important to note that the Greek word (synkalein) translated *called*, which can also be translated summoned, denotes an authoritative and intentional convening of a special group for a specific purpose. Not just anyone can respond to a summons. The summons in our text was sent by the authority of the King of kings to convene the twelve Apostles alone for a particular task.

We know from this passage and other scriptures that the 12 apostles, who had a close relationship with Jesus and were eyewitnesses of his earthly ministry, had unique authority to carry out His plans. In addition to being given power to work miracles, which authenticated them as ministers of Christ, God used them and their close associates to write the New Testament.

Let me be clear, there are no longer men today who have the same qualifications, (i.e. they were eyewitnesses of Christ’s resurrection) and the authority to do what the apostles were called to do.

But that being said, God is still calling believers to take on specific roles in his Church and is sending them into the world with his power to carry out specific plans in specific places.

Since the apostles, the gospel has spread and New Testament churches have been planted all over the world because men and women have heard the summons of the Lord and wholeheartedly gave themselves to fulfilling it.

Now, let me remind you that before Jesus chose the twelve apostles from among his many followers, he had an all-night prayer meeting with God the Father (Luke 6:12-16).

And after a night of communing with His Father, He chose twelve who were already closely following Him and appointed them to the office of apostle. Again, these apostles were given special authority, and would play a key role in laying the foundation of the church with Jesus as the chief cornerstone.

During the early, we read in Acts 13:1-4 that Paul, who already was called to be an apostle, received another specific summons, along with Barnabas, that sent them on their first missionary journey. This call to missions came from the Holy Spirit as they, along with some church leaders, sought the Lord in worship based prayer and fasting.

God's word in Acts 13:2 records: *"While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."* Acts 13:2

An important lesson to learn here is that "discerning your calling is not a one-time event, but rather an ongoing process" (Bryan Dik). As we, like Jesus, commune with God in prayer, and like the 12 disciples, take steps of faith in obedience to God's word, we will hear the summons of the Lord and discern our gifts and callings.

Unless we maintain close communion with the Lord, we will not only miss opportunities that will lead us into our callings, we will lack the faith and character necessary to step into it. Mark 3:13-14

I wonder if our prayer lives bear any resemblance to the prayer life of Jesus. Do we only seek the hand of God to move in our lives for our personal gain? Or do we spend significant time seeking to know the heart and plans of the Lord?

I want to submit to you that those who hear the summons of the Lord and are gripped with a compelling responsibility to carry it out, are those who have a close relationship with the Lord.

There are numerous people today who desperately need the hope and healing that is found in Christ alone. We can't reach everybody, but we can reach somebody. We can't as individuals or as a church meet every need, but we can do something.

And if we are cultivating close communion with the Lord, we will not only acquire great compassion to see the needs of people, but we will hear Him calling us to do something about it.

I appreciate how Alan Redpath put it: "Recognition of need must be followed by earnest, persistent waiting upon God until the overwhelming sense of world need becomes a specific burden in my soul for one particular piece of work which God would have me do" (Alan Redpath).

## **2. Jesus supplied His surrendered disciples with power to fulfill His purpose**

Secondly, Jesus supplied His surrendered disciples with power to fulfill His purpose. Again in verse one we read: "And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases," Luke 9:1

As I've shared before, it's vital we understand that the kingdom of God operates under a principle of authority. To know God's power to carry out His plans we must be under His authority. Although the disciples of the Lord still had a lot of growing to do in faith, they were consecrated to the Lord—they had left all to follow Him.

Furthermore, after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, they continued in the power of the Spirit to live lives in communion and consecration to the Lord. And as they continued to live their lives in consecration to the known will of God, the Spirit gave them insight into the unknown will of God.

The Apostle Paul made this clear when he wrote: *“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. <sup>2</sup> Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”* Romans 12:1-2

If we aren't being obedient to what we already know God wants us to do, if we are not surrendered to the general will of God as revealed in the word of God, it's very unlikely that we will come to know the specific plans and purposes of God for our lives.

As my friend Pastor Troy put it: “A good principle as we pursue the will of God is simply this, Embracing the OBVIOUS will of God that has been revealed in scripture will enhance our ability to discern the OBSCURE will of God in specific areas of our life. In other words, if we are not doing what is clearly stated in scripture we will struggle to understand what God wants us to do in areas where the scripture is silent.

While the “general” will of God is clearly revealed in scripture in areas such as our salvation, our piety, our treatment of others, the “specific” will of God for daily decisions and ordinary moments can be more difficult to discern. The key to discerning and doing the will of God in every ordinary moment is to live under the surrendered control of the Holy Spirit. To allow God's voice and presence to be the dominant influence in our life and to yield priority to the Word and Spirit of God in every moment of the day.”

Again, the kingdom of God operates under the principle of authority. Many today want to know the power of God without being under the authority of God. Moreover, they want to know the specific plans of God for their lives, but they're not obeying the obvious will of God as revealed in scripture.

Beloved, to understand the will of God more deeply and to know His specific plans concerning our lives we must learn to cultivate a deep and intimate relationship with the Lord and live a life that is consecrated to His known will.

### **3. Jesus sent His obedient disciples to proclaim the gospel and heal people.**

Moving to our final point: Jesus sent His obedient disciples to proclaim the gospel and heal people. Having summoned the twelve apostles and giving them power and authority over demons and to cure diseases, Luke continues: "*and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.*" Luke 9:2

Why did Jesus give his apostles power and authority over demons and to cure diseases? The word of God in the book of Hebrews explains that the miraculous power that the apostles had before the New Testament was completed authenticated their ministry.

The author of Hebrews writes: "*how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, <sup>4</sup> while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.*" Hebrews 2:3-4

Now, it's important to note hear that although the apostles were uniquely given authority and miraculous power that authenticated their gospel ministry, that's not to say that God doesn't still work miracles today.

However, it's important to clarify that the primary way to authenticate whether a preacher is proclaiming the truth is by the written word of

God. The scriptures not signs are the final authority on all matters of faith and practice.

But sadly, because many today are looking to signs and not to the scriptures, they are being led astray by false teachers—wolves in sheep's clothing.

Now, although faithful Christians must stress that the scriptures not signs are the final authority, that's not to say that God doesn't use other means to authenticate true representatives of His kingdom.

Besides proclaiming scripture, one of the primary ways we've been sent by God to represent His kingdom, is by lovingly and compassionately meeting physical needs.

We can pray for God's supernatural intervention to meet physical needs, but most often Christians demonstrate that they are sent by a loving God by actively meeting those physical needs through ordinary ways as they are compelled by Christ's extraordinary love."

As the apostle John, who was given the ability to work miracles, wrote: *"But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?"* 1 John 3:17

In his commentary, William Barclay recounts: General Booth (founder of the Salvation army) was once blamed for offering food and meals to poor people instead of the simple gospel. The old warrior flashed back, 'It is impossible to comfort men's hearts with the love of God when their feet are perishing with cold.

Of course, it's possible to over stress material things. But it is equally possible to neglect them. The church will forget only at her peril that Jesus first sent out his men to preach the kingdom and to heal, to save men in body and soul."

Now while Jesus summoned, supplied, and sent His disciples to proclaim the good news of the kingdom, and to heal, he gave further instructions to them:

*“And he said to them, “Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not have two tunics. <sup>4</sup> And whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. <sup>5</sup> And wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them.” <sup>6</sup> And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.” Luke 9:3-6*

When Jesus says, take nothing for your journey, this does not mean that all believers must take a vow of poverty. Rather, the itinerate ministry Jesus was calling his apostles to at that time, required that they travel light.

They needed to travel light because, as one commentator explained: the man who travels light travels fast. The more a man is cluttered up with material things the more he is shackled to one place. God [uses] a settled ministry; but he also [uses] those who will abandon earthly things to adventure for him.” William Barclay

Notice that Jesus also said that if people did not receive their ministry they were to shake off the dust of their feet as they left town. This act was a common practice among Jewish Rabbis. When they left a predominantly gentile town, they shook off the dust on their feet as if to say they did not want anything corrupt to go with them.

Likewise, if the message the apostles preached was not received even by their own people, they were to shake off the dust of their feet and move on to the next town. They were not to stay there and argue with people. Remember, it's not about winning an argument; it's about winning souls.

Therefore, they were to shake off the dust and by doing so they were testifying that the villagers were not rejecting them. Rather, they were



rejecting the Lord and to their own hurt missing out on the kingdom blessings that were being offered to them in the messiah.

Remember, as kingdom representatives, we are called to build bridges to bring the gospel to people not to burn bridges. Therefore, all our words, actions, and attitudes should testify that we've been sent by Heaven's King so that even if people reject us it will not be because we have misrepresented Jesus.

And when we supernaturally represent Christ, our witness together with the witness of those who come after us can continue to have an effect even after we're gone.

Notice that the ministry of the apostles had such an effect that it caught the attention of Herod who was an official of Rome and had earlier ordered the execution of John the Baptist:

*“Now Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was happening, and he was perplexed, because it was said by some that John had been raised from the dead, <sup>8</sup> by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the prophets of old had risen. <sup>9</sup> Herod said, “John I beheaded, but who is this about whom I hear such things?” And he sought to see him.” Luke 9:7-9*

Again, the ministry of the apostles had such a supernatural effect that it came to the attention of Herod. Things were happening that people knew could only have a divine explanation. Although Herod had John executed to please his spiteful pagan wife, John's testimony also had a lingering effect on Herod.

And later, when he heard about the supernatural things that were happening through the apostles, and that people were saying that John was raised from the dead, he was perplexed. And as a result, he sought to see Jesus for himself.

O that our witness would have such an impact for good on unbelievers that it would have a lingering effect that would cause them to think of the Lord even when we are not around.

Keep in mind, that the summons of Jesus to the apostles was not only about proclaiming the gospel with their words, but it involved miraculous deeds, deeds that not only showcased the power of God, but also displayed His love and compassion.

Recently I read about the work of missionaries to the Kurdish people who were spread over miles of mountainside on the Turkish border after fleeing Saddam Hussein's Iraq during the Gulf War. "Christian agencies were flooding in with food, medical help, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But most of the Christian workers connected with the people there only from trucks and distribution points, where they handed out food and blankets.

But the missionaries from one particular mission organization really broke through the barrier that others were encountering when they tried to talk about Jesus. They had a unique way of getting close to the people and winning their respect and their trust. Are you ready to hear their radical outreach strategy? These missionaries picked up the garbage. See, it was everywhere on those mountainsides, and it was getting pretty gross. Nobody wanted to do the garbage, but those who were willing to were the ones those people listened to.

"What opened doors and hearts" among those needy people on that Iraqi mountainside," says one devotional writer, "is the same thing that will open doors and hearts where you are—a willingness to win the right to be heard by being there for people's garbage. It's what Jesus did (Philippians 2:5-7).

Being God, He made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant in a body of flesh and blood. He humbled Himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross. He touched the lepers that no one else would touch. He stopped for people that everyone else passed by. He washed the dirty feet of His followers. He allowed men He had created to beat Him and crucify Him. The King of heaven came to us as a servant and He stole our hearts away.

You have neighbors who really need your Jesus, coworkers, friends and family members. How are you ever going to get them interested in the Jesus who is their only hope? By serving them; by being there to help them with the garbage of their lives. In Jesus' name, be there when their health levels them, when their marriage is struggling or over, when they lose a loved one. Be there when all the funeral folks have gone home. Be there when they're struggling financially, when they don't have enough help, when their business is in trouble, when their kids are in trouble, or when they've lost their reputation and nobody wants to be around them anymore. Their moment of loss is your moment of loving opportunity to show them Jesus' love in action. When others walk out, you walk in.

Then you will be ultimately in a position to explain to them where this love comes from. You're just loving them like you've been loved: By a Jesus who had poured everything out for you, because He died on a cross to clean up all the garbage of your life and the garbage of theirs.

First, you show them Jesus by serving them in the midst of their garbage. You win the right to be heard by being there to help pick up the pieces and pick up the garbage. Initially, they may not be interested in your message, but who can be against someone who picks up their heavy burden and helps them carry it; who is there when nobody else is? You can't be against that. It's that kind of love that will open their heart to the greatest love of all!

## **Conclusion**

Have you heard a summons from Jesus? If you have heard it during this message or have heard a summons from the Lord before this message, surrender to Him afresh and ask Him for the power to fulfill it for His glory? If you've not heard a summons from the Lord, it could be that you've not been making time to know His voice and His heart through worship based prayer and the word.

It could also mean that you're living in disobedience to His revealed will for your life and are grieving the Spirit who makes the plans of the Lord known. If that's you, seek the Lord's forgiveness, and again,

surrender to His will, and ask Him for the strength to walk in obedience to His word.

O let us all continually seek to stay close to the Lord so that we are sensitive to His voice, and always ready to go where He send us in His love to proclaim His gospel and bring His healing to a bound and broken world.