

The Requirements of the Mission

Luke 9:49–62 (ESV)

INTRODUCTION: On this first Sunday of the new year, as a church, we stand on the brink of some tremendous challenges and opportunities.

- The new building will be opening very soon.
- South property is demolished so that we will have room for growth.
- The new church campus launches next week.
- We are exploring the possibility of adding a balcony to make room for further growth.
- Our office will likely need to expand for more staff.
- Thanks to the generous invitation of Congressman Bean, on February 16th I will be opening a session of Congress in prayer.
- The Maximum Life ministry is taking what we do here further than ever before.

The fields are white unto harvest. It is important that we take some time on this first Sunday of the new year to circle the wagons and make sure we are all on the same page and committed to the same mission.

CONTEXT: We come today to the hinge verse on which the **Gospel of Luke** turns, verse 51. As Luke writes - ⁵¹ When the days drew near for him to be taken up, **he set his face to go to Jerusalem.**

Until this point, Jesus faithfully worked in northern Israel in the Galilee region. The ministry there had been quite successful. It might be expected that he would live out His days there and become a famous prophet, like Isaiah or Elijah. But he was more than a prophet - and He had a mission that could only be fulfilled in one city on the planet - the city of Jerusalem.

Galilee was a rural area filled with small towns and villages. **Jerusalem** was a historic city of significant consequence.

It was literally a city set upon a hill. The entire journey would be uphill for Jesus and the disciples. That is why David gave the people “Psalms of Ascent” to sing as they journeyed UP to Jerusalem.

- It was the epicenter of **Jewish worship** - it was there that the magnificent temple stood. That house of worship represented everything that Judaism was or hoped to be. The synagogues of Galilee were faint allusions to that marvelous building.
- It was the **political center** of Israel, where Herod Antipas had his primary palace.
- It was the **military center** of Israel - As a client state of Rome, it was there in Fort Antonius that hundreds of hardened soldiers were stationed to keep the Jews in line.
- It was the **historic center** of Israel -

ABRAHAM and Melchizedek- Remember in **Genesis 14** - Abraham's nephew and family were taken hostage following a military attack, much like what is happening in Gaza today. Abraham puts together a small attack force, defeats the attacking kings, and delivers his family. It was then that an enigmatic figure stepped into the story. He is called Melchizedek, the king of Salem. Jeru-Salem. Salem means peace, Jeru means city. So Jerusalem is the City of Peace.

ABRAHAM and Isaac - It was there in Jerusalem that God called Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. In fact, if you see the Al-Aqsa Mosque there in Jerusalem, know that inside that Mosque is the stone where God provided a substitute just before Abraham sacrificed Isaac.

ADAM was created - Many rabbis believe that it was there that God formed Adam from the dust of the ground.

DAVID - King David made Jerusalem the capital of his kingdom ten years after becoming king.

If you go there today - and I hope we will be able to again someday, you will find that the city of Jerusalem has been built and torn down 10 times. Every layer of sediment takes you back centuries.

If you stand on the current ground level of the Temple Mount, you have to look down a corridor 70 or 80 feet in order to see the level on which Solomon's temple stood.

So imagine the history of that place.

- **Alexander the Great** marched through Jerusalem.
- **Napoleon Bonaparte** marched through Jerusalem.

And now, the time had come for Jesus to go to Jerusalem.

As He journeys toward Jerusalem, we find him doubling down on some of the most important principles related to the mission of Christ's followers.

The first principle is found in....

TEXT: Luke 9:49–62 (ESV)

1. Our Mission Requires Others

⁴⁹ John answered, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he does not follow with us."⁵⁰ But Jesus said to him, "**Do not stop him, for the one who is not against you is for you.**"

This is a warning against extreme tribalism. In other words, don't be the sort of Christian that says the Kingdom of Heaven is made up of **our FOUR and no MORE.**

This church is remarkably unified. We believe the Bible is God's inerrant word. We are committed, above all else, to the faithful exposition of scripture. We generally share a conservative, traditional view of the world. We are driven to engage with that world and effect change that we believe would be pleasing to our Lord. I would venture to say that if God calls you to move to another state, you are going to have a very difficult time finding there what we have here. BUT with that said, we must avoid the temptation to believe that God is only doing something here. We have to recognize that the Great Shepherd has many flocks.

If we are going to take the Gospel to the world, we must be willing to lock arms from time to time with people who do things differently than we do.

Dr. Al Mohler, who will be with us in a couple of weeks, recommends that we develop a theological triage.

The word **triage** comes from the French word **trier**, which means "to sort."

In the medical context, the triage officer is the front-line agent for deciding which patients need the most urgent treatment. Without such a process, the scraped knee would receive the same urgency of consideration as a gunshot wound to the chest.

In the same way, there should be a TRIAGE of Truths.

LEVEL 1 – Defines Christianity

First-level theological issues include those doctrines most central and essential to the Christian faith.

- The Trinity
- The nature of Christ – Deity and Humanity
- Justification by Faith alone
- Authority of the Scriptures

LEVEL 2 – Determines Church Affiliation

- Meaning and mode of Baptism – For example, Baptists and Presbyterians differ over the baptism of infants.
- The Security of the Believer
- The Lord's Supper

ILLUSTRATION: Think of it this way - The big C church is like a nation, and the state borders are like denominations. We are a Baptist church; we believe that baptism is to be performed by immersion on a person who has made the conscious decision to follow Jesus Christ as Savior. I have dear friends who are Presbyterian; they are brothers in Christ. They believe in what is called Covenant Theology. They will sprinkle water on a newborn in the belief that one day, that child will come to faith. I don't see that in scripture. I could not faithfully support that as a church member. But I still believe those men are my brothers, and frankly, I need them.

ILLUSTRATION: Think of it this way - The big C church is like a nation, and the state borders are like denominations.

LEVEL 3 – Areas of Liberty

Third-order issues are doctrines over which Christians may disagree and remain in close fellowship, even within local congregations. For example, I would put most of the debates over eschatology in this category.

- Views regarding the End Times
- Views regarding predestination and free will
- Worship styles and preferences
- How we function as a church

It has been well said, *“In the essentials unity in the non-essentials liberty”*

Jesus says, if this man is casting out demons in Jesus's name, don't hinder him. I can almost here them say, “But he's doing it the wrong way!” Yes, he probably is, but give him time, and he will figure that out.

John Maxwell said it this way - *One is too small a number to accomplish greatness.*

Our mission requires others...

2. Our Mission Requires Focus

⁵¹ When the days drew near for him to be taken up, **he set his face** to go to Jerusalem.

ILLUSTRATION: The idea there, is one that he will illustrate within a couple of verses. It's the image of a farmer plowing a field.

In order to plow in straight lines, the plowman had to fix his gaze on a particular point across the field. He couldn't get distracted. He couldn't look back. He made a beeline to that particular point.

That point for Jesus was Jerusalem.

The primary reason he was born on Christmas was so that he could die on Good Friday and be raised on Easter.

If that did not happen, His teaching, His miracles, His very existence would be without merit. He must go to the cross.

Just as Jesus set His face toward Jerusalem, we must stay focused. We must remember that everything we do is about the Kingdom of Heaven.

- **Parenting** - We disciple our children and lead them to Jesus. We train them in His ways. We teach them His Word.

- **Work** - Our jobs are not just about making money - they are about mission. We go to work as missionaries. We take a portion of our increase and invest it into the mission of the Kingdom.

We must always work to stay focused.

3. Our Mission Requires Mercy

⁵² And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him.

Samaria was an odd place for the Jews.

When the Assyrians destroyed the Northern Kingdom, the King of Assyria sent Assyrian men to settle and marry the poor Jewish women of the land who remained. The result was the part Jew, part Assyrian-Samaritan people.

They were ethnically different.
They were also religiously different.

They refused to worship in Jerusalem. They built an altar at Mount Gerizim, there in Samaria. They only received Genesis - Deuteronomy as holy scripture. They rejected the Prophets, the Psalms, and Proverbs. They had their own priesthood, their own law, and their own place of worship...their own customs.

Jews would typically bypass Samaria, traveling north to south.

If a Jewish man had to pass through Samaria, he would take off his sandals and shake the dust off of his feet.

Jesus had sent an advance team into Samaria to arrange for Him and his entourage to pass through, gather provisions, and stay a few nights. It was common when people were caravanning to a particular location for them to let their host know where they were ultimately going.

When they told the leaders of Samaria that Jesus intended to go to Jerusalem on a religious mission -they refused to allow them to pass through.

⁵³ But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. ⁵⁴ And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?"

James and John were furious. Remember, they were called the "Sons of Thunder", and here you see why._

They suggest that the Lord grants them permission to call fire down from Heaven and nuke the Samaritans...which sounds like the perfect answer to WWJD?

I mean, there WAS some OT precedence for this -

- Elijah called fire down with the Prophets of Baal.
- In 2 Kings 1:1–14, King Ahaziah twice sent soldiers to take Elijah and how twice the prophet said, “If I am a man of God, may fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men!” (vv. 10, 12)—and it did!
- God sent fire down on Sodom and Gomorrah.
- One day, if a person rejects Jesus Christ, the fire of Hell will fall upon him.

But this is a day of grace. The Gospel requires us to see people not as the enemies we wish to destroy but as our mission field we hope to win. In fact, a Samaritan woman was one of the first people to come to faith in Christ.

⁵⁵ But he turned and rebuked them. ⁵⁶ And they went on to another village.

Our mission requires others, focus, mercy....

4. Our Mission Requires Sacrifice

⁵⁷ As they were going along the road, someone said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.” ⁵⁸ And Jesus said to him, “**Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.**”

a. Are you willing to sacrifice security to follow Jesus?

One of the significant needs that a person has is security. We need to know there will be food and a roof over our heads. When you remove temporal security from a person, it can cause significant mental and emotional anxiety.

Jesus is not saying that security is bad - but instead, he is saying that ***we must choose eternal security over temporal security.***

During his earthly life, Jesus never owned a home. He relied on the kindness and hospitality of others. His followers would, at least for a season, have to do the same.

As you read through the Bible, you will notice that there are times when the Biblical characters put down roots and build their tribe - The Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and King David. Then there are other seasons that they were uprooted and on the move - the Prophet Daniel, for example, was deported to Babylon. Paul and most of the Apostles scattered worldwide to preach the Gospel. James stayed back in Jerusalem and built the mother church.

Everyone is not called to liquidate and move, but all must be willing.

I have made it a regular habit to go before the Lord and say, “Am I still where you want me to be”? I am His servant; he gives my orders.

As Swindoll says, “A disciple holds all things loosely.” We must be willing to let go of our security if the mission requires it.

Over and over, Jesus will tell his followers to be vividly aware of what this might COST them:

Luke 14:27–33 (ESV)

²⁷Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. ²⁸For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? ²⁹Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, ³⁰saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ ³¹Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? ³²And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. ³³So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

b. Are you willing to sacrifice your plans to follow Jesus?

⁵⁹ To another he said, “Follow me.” But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” ⁶⁰ And Jesus said to him, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”

This one can be a bit confusing at first glance. The Ten Commandments taught us to honor our father and mother. It appears that this man’s father has just died and that Jesus is telling him to skip the funeral. That’s not what is happening.

Funerals, in that day, were massive undertakings. If this man’s father had died, the funeral would be happening already. MOST LIKELY, what this man is saying is - “Jesus, I’m the eldest son; if I can just wait until my father passes away and I have an inheritance, then it will make a lot more sense for me to tackle this sort of ministry.”

In other words, he had a life plan that Jesus was interrupting.

Jesus says to him - what is happening here is far more important than everything that surrounds the burying of your dad. You have encountered the only one who can raise your dad to life. You should let those who don’t get it deal with the burial, and you should come with me.

c. Are you willing to sacrifice everything at a moment’s notice to follow Jesus?

61 Yet another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home." 62 Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

The picture here is that of a man plowing a field with oxen. To keep the lines straight, he must find a point in the distance and fix his attention on that point; if he looks back, what will happen? The oxen will wander offline.

Jesus says, "I've called you; you must drop everything and go with me." If they can't get the significance of that call and the time they were living... they will never make it through what would come after.

You see, the time was coming when Christians would be fed to the lions. They would be dipped in tar and set ablaze to light the city streets. If this man couldn't drop all to follow, he would never be able to face the threats of Nero and Rome.

CONCLUSION/INVITATION: The year was 1995; I had been in a prolonged season of struggle as I sought to discern whether or not God was calling me to lay aside my pursuit of a career in the entertainment industry in order to pursue a call to ministry. I decided to have a conversation with one of the associate pastors of our church, a brother named Harold King.

I sat down in his office and poured my heart out. I told him how I had been struggling with the decision, how I had climbed up on mountains trying to get a word from the Lord, but I couldn't get clear direction - and how I just needed him to help me figure out what I needed to do with my life.

I don't know what I expected, maybe for him to put an arm around me and say, "Son, I'm not surprised at all... you'll make a fine preacher..." That's not what he said. In fact, he said just the opposite. He looked me square in the eye and said, "Zach, do anything in the world other than become a preacher... if you can".

In fact, do whatever you need to do to get this idea out of your mind...if you can. Go on and live a happy life. Pursue your career, make a lot of money, and be a good church member somewhere. But for heaven's sake, DO NOT PREACH....if you do not HAVE to preach. I *had* to preach.