

I was searching for something on my computer this week and stumbled upon the manuscript of the first sermon I preached on this platform. And after reading it I have to say, it was...ok. I started at an intensity level of 10 and pretty much maintained that throughout. I apologize if you left here exhausted that morning. But I stayed true to Scripture and applied it well, so it was ok. Regardless of how it went, I had to start somewhere. I responded to God's call to step into vocational ministry, watched and learned and, at some point, it had to be my turn. That was the morning I took it.

Think about the first time you took a turn in something. Educators, you started as a student teacher, watched, learned, but eventually you had to get up in front of a class for the first time and teach. Medical professionals went to school, learned in rotation, but the time came when you had to diagnose and treat a patient. Or maybe it was something as simple as throwing a ball or brushing your teeth. In all those things, we had to start somewhere and take a turn. But what about in your relationship with Jesus and his call to make disciples?

As we continue in our series *Succession*, Jesus is going to tell his disciples "It's your turn." He has taken them through the ***Four I's of Discipleship: Identify, Invite, Invest, Ignite***. He chose them, called them to himself, poured himself into them and modeled how it's done, and now he launches them into the mission. It's their turn.

Jesus wants to launch all of us too. He wants us to take our turn. But for many Christians, we resist because we feel ill-equipped, are exhausted most of the time, or impose limitations on ourselves and God. So how do we overcome those obstacles? How do we take our turn with the hopeful expectation that something good will happen? What help does Jesus provide along the way? If you have been resistant to taking your turn, God has something for you this morning.

[Luke 9:1-6] And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, ² and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. ³ And he said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not have two tunics. ⁴ And whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. ⁵ And wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them." ⁶ And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.

After time in relationship, observation, and learning, Jesus sends out the twelve on the mission of preaching the Kingdom and healing. The miracles they perform will authenticate the message they proclaim. It's their turn, and the mission of God will now be carried out not by one, but by thirteen: Jesus and the twelve. God's succession plan is on the move. In Ch. 6, Jesus said a disciple will become like his teacher. He has developed his character in them, modeled the mission, and now sends them out to accomplish that same mission with that same message. Succession is taking what you have been given and turning around and giving it to someone else. But while they are sent out on their own, they are not asked to go it alone. **When it's your turn, Jesus equips you with resources.** He gives you everything you need to accomplish what he has called you to.

Jesus gives them power and authority and will provide for their physical needs through the people who respond to their message. Power is spiritual ability and authority is the right to exercise that power. The word for power is *dynamis*; think about dynamic or dynamite. That's what Jesus gives. It's the same explosive power that will raise him from the dead, that will create and unite the church, and that is in you if you have declared your faith in Christ. If you've ever thought "I don't have what it takes to do what God is calling me to do", you're right. By yourself you don't. But God gives you his power to accomplish his mission.

Think about a bike versus a car. A bike requires your power to make it go. A car has an external power source. All you have to do is engage it, and it allows you to go faster and farther than you could on a bike. That's the same difference between operating on your power instead of God's.

If you are a follower of Jesus, you have been identified, invited, and invested in by Jesus, and he wants to ignite you into your homes, neighborhoods, workplaces, and this church to take what you've been given and turn around to give it to someone else; to believers and to unbelievers. You have everything you need to make that happen, regardless of where you are in your relationship with Jesus. Think about Troy's story from last week. He said God changed his life and now he's looking for others to tell about how he can do the same for them. Some will receive it. Some won't. Your job is to take your turn in the power and authority of Jesus, pass on what you've been given, and leave the results to him. And the more you grow, the more you'll have to pass on. But you don't have to wait to give what you

But as you do, realize a life poured out for Christ is depleting. Jesus knows this. He's fully God *and* fully man. He knows exhaustion, so **when it's your turn, Jesus renews you with rest.** If you want to be effective for God, worn out won't work out.

[Luke 9:10] ¹⁰ On their return the apostles told him all that they had done. And he took them and withdrew apart to a town called Bethsaida.

The apostles return with a report about all that happened. This is prayerful debrief. If you are going to be about the business of God, you sometimes have to have a business meeting. They talk with Jesus and each other about the high/low, successes/challenges of their ministry, celebrating, processing, and encouraging one another while glorifying Jesus. It's why we make a point to tell our stories here. They are intended to glorify God and encourage us.

Jesus then initiates a retreat to Bethsaida. He could have heard their report and said "Great. Go do it again." But instead, because he loves them and knows what's best for them, he takes them away to be apart from the whirlwind. This is not an escape. It is a much-needed opportunity for them to rest, and Jesus goes with because he will be the source of that replenishment.

If you want to recharge, you have to plug into the power source. Most of us carry around a daily reminder of that (cell phones). Without juice, these won't work. Without juice, neither will you.

This area is still a work in progress in my life. Martha and I got away for our twentieth wedding anniversary a couple of weeks ago and I have to admit it was very difficult for me to let go. But I also know a depleted Kurt is not an effective Kurt, and it's not fun to be around me either. What

about you? Are you feeling energized or weary? If weary, Jesus doesn't want you to just keep going like that. It's why he says, "Come to me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." If you are weary and burdened, and there's plenty going on to make us that way, go to Jesus. Revisit our New Normal and Revived summer sermon series, particularly sabbath rest and silence and solitude messages. Jesus wants to meet you wherever you are and give you the rest that only he provides. He wants you rested because he wants the best for you and best from you.

[Luke 9:11-16] ¹¹ When the crowds learned it, they followed him, and he welcomed them and spoke to them of the kingdom of God and cured those who had need of healing. ¹² Now the day began to wear away, and the twelve came and said to him, "Send the crowd away to go into the surrounding villages and countryside to find lodging and get provisions, for we are here in a desolate place." ¹³ But he said to them, "You give them something to eat." They said, "We have no more than five loaves and two fish—unless we are to go and buy food for all these people." ¹⁴ For there were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, "Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each." ¹⁵ And they did so, and had them all sit down. ¹⁶ And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing over them. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd.

The crowd follows Jesus and his apostles and Jesus responds by welcoming them, preaching the Kingdom, and healing. Sound familiar? As the day goes by, the twelve tell Jesus to send them away to get food and lodging. It's a compassionate request. But Jesus responds with what appears to be a ludicrous request that will reveal where they are in their faith and understanding and lead to some growing pains. You feed them. Five loaves and two fish won't be enough to satisfy the crowd, and they'd need to spend about eight months of wages to go buy enough food for everyone. **They focus on limitations and miss what Jesus is trying to do.** You ever miss it? Even though the twelve just saw Jesus calm a storm, cast out a demon, and raise someone from the dead (read Luke 3 times), and they then had their own experience of healing in Jesus' power and authority, they seem to forget all that and say it's impossible. They should have said "We can't, but you can."

What is your response when it appears God is asking the impossible? **How quickly do we go to limitations instead of looking to the one who is limitless?** Does God really want us to train and launch 10,000 men and women into their God given purpose in this environment, with this decreasing interest in God in our nation? Yes! Does God really want to impact the world through your life? Yes! But we have to remember what the twelve forgot: **Anything God asks you to do is possible because he's the one who will be doing it.**

Jesus does not respond with condemnation. **When it's your turn, (and you have moments like these), Jesus transforms you with reminders and revelation.** The Teacher goes back to work. One of my favorite things in this passage is how Luke refers to these guys first as the twelve, then as apostles, but here they are called disciples. It's time for them to be learners again, and it shows the pattern we are to follow throughout our lives.

Jesus is so smooth they probably don't realize they are learning and following God's succession plan. He "sends" them to the crowd to separate them into groups of 50, and then, in his power,

multiplies the five loaves and two fish to provide for the entire crowd. But Jesus doesn't pass out the food to each person. He gives it to his disciples to give to the people. They pass on to others what they have been given. They are mediators of God's blessing, and they are reminded of how this whole succession thing works. Through the only miracle recorded in all four Gospels, Jesus uses their mistake to increase their faith in and understanding of who he is (Peter will call Jesus the Christ in the very next passage) and how his mission will be fulfilled.

You won't get it right all the time because of doubt in yourself, doubt in God, or the fact that you are imperfect. But God is not asking you to do this perfectly, nor is he sitting around ready to bust you. He knows you will grow as you go, and he will meet you in those times of tripping over yourself to teach you more about himself, his Kingdom, and his mission. I have made so many mistakes in my role, and if I told you all of them, you'd probably want to leave. We must always be learners, and mistakes are part of learning. I have a tuba player, guitarist, and bassoon player in my home, and I have heard a lot of bad notes in my life. You could call those notes failures, but they are also all learning moments that lead to greater understanding and success. Jesus uses these moments to remind you who he is and teach you how to live out his mission.

Pray for our staff. I love our staff and it is a joy to work with them every day. They have had to completely change the way we do church, they have taken care of so many of you, and they have led the way in initiatives to bless our city. They have been pouring themselves out and it's time for them to enter into a season of rest during these holidays. Would you pray for that to be possible and for them to do it? And if you know any of them personally, would you give them a word of thanks and encouragement. I'm confident that will energize them.

Take your turn. God's got you. There are believers in this church who desperately need you to help them take their next step in their relationship with Jesus, and there is a world looking for life, hope, love, and unity only found in God's Kingdom. You have God's power, authority, message, and a life that authenticates that message. People ask why there aren't miracles anymore. God can do anything at any time, and I believe there are miracles today. But miracles were performed with regularity when God was inaugurating a new work, a new revelation. The compelling evidence and authentication God wants to use these days is your changed life. God wants you to take what he has done in you and given to you and courageously give it to someone else.

Ask God to show you where you are focusing on limits instead of focusing on the one who is limitless. Ask him where fear, self-doubt, scarcity are causing you to stumble in living out your purpose. Ask him to remind you of who he is and that you are capable of more than you can ask or imagine because he who empowers you is capable of more than you can ask or imagine.

And remember, ultimately, what God is asking us to pass on. **[Luke 9:17] ¹⁷ And they all ate and were satisfied.** What is realized in a full stomach is a picture of what Jesus does for an empty soul. And for 2,000 years, generations of sent followers of Jesus have been passing on the satisfaction only Jesus provides, and now it's your turn. You can do it, because he will do it.

COMMUNION