



“Still So Much To Learn”

Luke 9:43-50

October 14th, 2018

We are going to be in Luke Chapter 9, and the title of this morning’s message is called *Still So Much To Learn*.

There are certain phrases that we have in our English language that we use when we think that somebody is slow to learn the things that they ought to know and understand. I wonder if any of you have heard or used one of these phrases, or one of them has been used in reference you.

One of those phrases is: When will you get it through your thick skull (or head)? The idea is that the denseness of a person’s cranium affects their ability to learn. When will you get it through your thick skull (or head)?

Another of those phrases is: How many times do I have to tell you—or how many times must I repeat myself? This has the idea that out repetition of a certain point should cause the light to turn on in somebody’s mind.

Here is another phrase that might be my favorite: You need to wake up and smell the coffee! The idea of this is that you are going to take in some of that caffeinated coffee and will be alert. Your mind will be thinking a little clearer, and you will start understanding some things. Wake up and smell the coffee!

We have these saying, and as we get into the text of Scripture before us this morning, we will see that Jesus used a different phrase that I think is one of the kind of phrases I just mentioned. He will use it with His twelve, with His disciples.

We come to this portion of Scripture that contains a series of passages where the disciples were once again in need of serious correction. They needed to understand some things that evidentially they were slow to learn, and they were core vital elements of Christian truth.

I wonder how many of us will recognize that these are vital truths that we need to receive and learn as well, even though they might be a little difficult for us to accept and receive. However, we still need to learn these things and take them in.

Let’s get into the Gospel of Luke and see this series of passages that reveal what the disciples needed to learn and what we need to be learning as well from the Lord. Luke Chapter 9 and Verses 43 through 50. Jesus had just cast out a demon from a suffering boy. Then we read in Verses 43:

⁴³And all were astonished at the majesty of God. But while they were all marveling at everything he was doing, Jesus said to his disciples, ⁴⁴“Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men.” ⁴⁵But they did not understand this saying, and it was concealed from them, so that they might not perceive it. And they were afraid to ask him about this saying.

⁴⁶An argument arose among them as to which of them was the greatest.

⁴⁷But Jesus, knowing the reasoning of their hearts, took a child and put him by his side ⁴⁸and said to them, “Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. For he who is least among you all is the one who is great.

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

We see this series of passages, each one with a different lesson that the disciples needed to learn. The first thing that Jesus said in that sequence is: *Let these words sink into your ears*. Maybe that is another phrase that we will add to our list—oh, let this sink in, because sometimes there are truths that are hard for us to learn and they do take repetition and the Spirit’s work to cause God’s truths to not only go into the ears, but into the heart as well.

What we have here is a major junction in the Gospel of Luke. From Chapters 3 into Chapter 9, Christ has been the Light shining in the region of Galilee. That was where His ministry had been focused. He was preaching and performing great miracles.

Now, as we will read in Luke Chapter 9 and Verse 51, Jesus is going to set His face to Jerusalem. He will get on the path to the city of peace. That is what Jerusalem means. It is to the city of peace that He will resolutely go, where He will accomplish peace—peace between sinners and God through the sacrifice of His own body on the cross and where redemption may occur through Jesus and in Christ alone.

We come to this major section heading and see that it concludes the Galilean ministry of Jesus. He had been teaching and instructing His disciples for close to two years. What we see in the passage we just read is that while they were apostles, they were, in fact, also disciples. Do you catch my meaning on that?

They are apostles. Jesus had sent them out to preach and to heal, and they were His official envoys. They went out with authority on His behalf. There was some substance to that position. They were apostles, but as we can see in this passage of Scripture, they were still disciples. They were learners. They were pupils. They were students and there were some very important messages that still needed to seep into their hearts, even after those years of following Jesus.

Now here in our midst at Bethel Grace, there are some of us whose eyes have been open to Jesus. Some of you have been following Him seriously for a matter of months. Some of you have been following Him for years. Some of you have been following Him for decades. I've got about two and a half decades following Him under my belt. Some of you have three, four or five decades of walking with the Lord.

Even with all this time following the Lord, I wonder if you have the ability to acknowledge that you still have a lot to learn. There are truths you might be able to understand with your mind, but still need to receive them into your heart so they really transform the way you view things in this world and in your life in the way you conduct yourself.

In this passage of Scripture, we have a few lessons that could be among the challenging ones to learn and live out in our lives. There is still so much for us to learn. With these lessons, I wonder if there is anybody here who might have to be willing to say: Yes, this needs to seep into my thick skull or head, or I need to wake up and smell the coffee on these things and really, really live this out and take it seriously.

What I want us to see in this text are three of the hard lessons of the Christian life. The disciples had to learn them and so do we. There is going to be a lesson about suffering. Then there will be a lesson about humility. Finally, there will be a lesson about unity. We want the Spirit to speak into our lives on each of these.

Let's take a closer look and see in this passage of Scripture:

1. The Redemptive Value of Suffering (43-45)

As we consider this point, it takes us back into the flow of everything that happened in the Gospel of Luke in this very important Chapter 9.

Jesus had revealed to His disciples that He was the Christ. Peter confessed it on behalf of the other disciples. Jesus had received that statement of who He is. Jesus had revealed that He is the Christ.

Jesus had come down from the Mount of Transfiguration, where He revealed His inherent glory to three of His disciples. Then He came down the mountain to encounter a dramatic and sorrowful scene of a child possessed by a demon. Evidentially, His disciples did not have the faith to cast that demon out.

So, the father came to Jesus and told Him that He had asked His disciples to cast out the demon and they could not do it. Then Jesus took matters into His own hands, and Jesus cast out the demon that had been afflicting that child. Once again, Christ overpowered the demonic realm. In this, His glory was put on display according to the text that we have read. It was a marvelous thing.

You can imagine as everybody was amazed by this, and how the disciples also might have been whipped up in to some misguided fervor about when Jesus would establish His Kingdom in fullness. People were talking. The buzz was buzzing. The wonder was palpable. The people were talking about everything that had happened, and they were astonished.

Maybe the people were thinking: Is this the time for the Messianic reign to be established in full measure, to be culminated, to have the amazing and glorious and overpowering reign of the Messiah over Rome and everybody else here on the earth.

It would have been very easy for the disciples to get whipped into that fever with everybody else. But what did Jesus say? Slow down! Verse 43:

⁴³And all were astonished at the majesty of God. But while they were all marveling at everything he was doing.

While they were all marveling—*all* is an inclusive word—everyone present including the disciples. *While they were all marveling at everything he was doing*—that led to a broader discussion. It went beyond just that particular miracle.

They were talking about everything that He was doing, everything that He was saying, and all the wonders that were being performed through the Messiah. They were all blown away and you can feel that energy in the middle of that crowd. That included the disciples too.

⁴³...Jesus said to his disciples, ⁴⁴“Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men.” ⁴⁵But they did not understand this saying, and it was concealed from them, so that they might not perceive it. And they were afraid to ask him about this saying.

Jesus told them to let this sink in. Jesus was saying: *I'm going to be delivered. I'm going to be given into the custody of sinners, of the hands of men.* If that seems to have an ominous tone to you, you are right because Jesus was talking about being put into the custody of fallen sinners who would cause Him to suffer.

Jesus was saying to His disciples: You just saw Me overpower a demon, but I am now drawing you back into the reality of what is to happen. Despite that, I am going to be handled and handed over. Jesus was reminding them of the suffering that was going to happen, and that He had revealed to them about two weeks earlier.

Reading this text, we need to see and understand a lesson that is not easily received into our hearts. That lesson is about the great redemptive value there is in suffering during the age that we live in now. It began with the suffering of the Messiah and extending to the trials and difficulties that the people of the Messiah experience.

The gate of Heaven was opened through suffering and the Kingdom of Heaven is advanced still today through the hardships faced by the people of God in extending the Word of that Kingdom.

There is redemptive value in suffering. Unique things happen when people are hurting, and they come with such power. It began with the Jesus and His atoning suffering on the cross. Unique and powerful things also happen when the world watches a Christian suffer and sees the light and the glory of God shining through them even in the middle of hard times.

One of the core New Testament teachings is that life to others happens through the suffering of some. Read your Bible! I challenge you to read through the book of I Peter. That book contains five short chapters where you will read about the hardships and the suffering of God's people. That language is used sixteen different times in those five chapters.

This weekend, I was reading this and thinking about the issue of suffering and also thinking about my wonderful mother. Yesterday was her seventieth birthday, assuming there are birthdays in Heaven. Mom had sixty-two years here on this earth, now she has had eight birthdays since being with the Lord.

When I was about ten-years-old, I saw with my own eyes when my mom got super sick. I saw the frailties of her body. Instead of making her bitter toward the Lord, her illness drew her into His loving grace. She came to a knowledge of Jesus Christ through her hardships and she became a light for the Lord in our neighborhood and to whomever she was with.

This was a beautiful sight to behold. There is something that happens when God's people are being strengthen by God through the difficulties that they face that shows the power of God to the people that are watching.

This is a hard lesson to learn. This is something that I think the enemy would like to conceal from us. Did you notice in Verse 45 it says that first they did not understand? They didn't even have the idea of a suffering Messiah anywhere on their grid. They did not understand it.

In addition to that, Verse 44 says that it was concealed from them so that they might not understand it. Concealed by who? You can read through the commentaries as see what people say about this.

Some people say that it was concealed by God. They were not ready for it yet. Others will say that it was concealed by the enemy. Looking through the pages of Scripture you can find a case for either possibility.

Even in the Gospel of Luke, we have learned that the parables were a form of judgment upon those who were hardening their hearts against the Lord. Jesus spoke in parables

that they might not have ears to hear and eyes to see. So, sometimes God conceals truth and judgment. We find that in the pages of the Bible.

But so does the devil. We read how the devil wants to take Gospel seeds away so that the Word won't remain. We read in II Corinthians how the devil wants to put a veil over people. I wonder if Satan was trying to veil the entire reality of the suffering Messiah from the eyes of the disciples.

In our day and age, we have come to understand the suffering of the Messiah and how that opened the Kingdom, but it is a much harder reality for you and me to receive that it is also through suffering that the Kingdom advances. But this is one of those lessons that we need receive if we are going to humble ourselves under the teaching of Scripture.

The redemptive value of suffering is a reality and I pray that by the work of the Spirit, these things will seep into our ears, into our hearts, and that there will be that supernatural sense of, dare I say, even joy—even while our hearts break. God can fill us up with a gladness of heart that has an eternal view on things.

The redemptive value of suffering is one of the lessons that we need to take in. As we continue in what is here in this portion of Scripture, we see a second lesson.

2. The Receptive Nature of Humility (46-48)

People who are truly humble of heart are going to receive into their care all kinds of different people.

We continue, and we see what it says going in to Verses 46 through 48. Boy oh boy, Verses 46 always cracks me up. I just shake my head. Verse 46:

⁴⁶An argument arose among them as to which of them was the greatest.

An argument! The disciples were sitting there arguing with one another about who was superior in relation to all the rest. Each disciple made his own cause: I'm the greatest among the twelve.

This was not a gentile discussion, nor a civil debate. The disciples were arguing about who was the greatest. They were having a dispute. I wonder if Peter and John who were sanctified in their later years looked back on this and read what Luke said about them. Read it and weep! That conversation happened.

I try to understand what went on here in context, trying to make sense of the language of what Jesus said next. I sometimes try to think about what gave rise to situations. So, understand that this is just my musing.

Perhaps the disciples were coming to an understanding of the principle of reproduction and leadership in Christian discipleship. Jesus had a larger body of seventy-two people

that followed Him very closely. Then He had twelve who were close. Then there were the three that were closer still.

When it became evident especially to the inner twelve that Jesus was preparing His people for leadership in the community and that they were going to be responsible for the discipleship of others, I wonder if they started scanning that group of people and thinking about how the different squads might be measured out.

There was Simon Peter possibly saying something like: Now, I'm the chief disciple here, so clearly the ones with the most potential should be the ones who are coming under my care. I've got so much to offer them. I have seen so many things. The ones who really seem to be taking flight in their understanding need to be under my tutelage and instruction. You guys all understand that, don't you?

John with his fiery nature said: No! No, I don't understand that. I've got so much to contribute. Maybe the disciples were having disputes about who goes where and how the teams would be divided up.

I then think of what Jesus said next about how humility is made evident in who we receive into our care. Verse 47:

⁴⁷But Jesus, knowing the reasoning of their hearts, took a child and put him by his side ⁴⁸and said to them, "Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. For he who is least among you all is the one who is great.

The disciples were talking about their relative superiority above the rest and the big difference they would make. Then Jesus took a toddler and told them that he was the great one and to take him into their care.

Understand that that was a culture that did not have the romanticized view of children that we have in our day. The disciples would be found saying to get the kids away. We have come to understand the potential in children and let them be trained early on, but I don't think the disciples were getting that.

They shooed the children away. Do you remember those accounts throughout the Gospels? I don't think they were having big gender reveal parties in their society. In our day we have the nursery painted and decorated months in advance, but that was not the case back then. That society did not view children the way that we do. I appreciate the way that we view and value children, but they did not think that way in that culture.

Jesus took this child and put him next to Him, then said: Whoever receives this child in my name receives me. If you receive me, you receive my Father. Jesus taught this lesson about the humility that is made evident in who it is that you receive in your care.

In that culture, some of the children would have been marginalized. That is sad but true. We need to ask ourselves who is it that is in my closest circle of fellowship and care. Is it the people that are the movers and shakers, and all the people you think have so much to offer? Or are you taking into your care people who are marginalized so that you might bless them and care for them?

That is the picture of the receptive nature of humility and Jesus said that this is greatness in the Kingdom of God. Jesus gives some incentive when He talks about this chain reaction of receiving things. Did you notice the trinitarian flare to the receptive nature of humility?

You receive the child, and you are receiving Me. You receive Me, you are receiving the One who sent Me. Jesus was talking about the manifestation of His presence in the lives of those who practice humility in this way

This is something for us to be thinking about and taking to heart. Who is in your closest circle, and how can you express humility by taking into your care people that others might overlook?

I think that is the lesson of humility that Jesus sought to get across in this passage of Scripture. We continue with one more lesson to learn. It is:

3. The Inclusive Nature of Unity (49-50)

It is the inclusive nature of unity among those who follow Jesus. We continue and see one more little episode. John wanted to move on. He had been talking about how much greater he was than Peter and James and all the rest. Jesus challenged that and John changed the subject, possibly because he was squirming. Maybe not. Verse 49:

⁴⁹John answered, “Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he does not follow with us.”

What we see here is that it is the first time that John spoke in the Gospel. It was usually Peter who did all the talking, but here John spoke up and he promptly put his foot in his mouth, just like Peter always did.

You must wonder if these men could get along with anybody in the ministry after John said this. They were sitting there sparring with one another and somehow someone else got lit up with the truth of Jesus and was doing ministry effectively in Jesus' Name.

So, John said to wait; they can't have that. It stirred something up inside of John. There was perhaps a little bit of something that was amiss, be it jealousy or unneeded exclusivism or something else.

As a result, John said that they had tried to stop him because he was not in their core circle and it had to stop. But Verse 50:

⁵⁰But Jesus said to him, “Do not stop him, for the one who is not against you is for you.”

I read this and was reminded how in the book of Philippians, Paul spoke of the fact that there were some who preached out of envy and rivalry, and others out of good will. I wonder if there was some type of envy and rivalry in the heart of John as he saw other people shining, whereas some of the disciples had trouble in casting out demons.

This is a reminder for local churches that in the body of Christ, we got to recognize that the Lord works powerfully even in denominations or networks that might not be conservative Baptist like us.

Could it be that the power of the Lord is on display in groups in churches that don't line up with everything that we would teach as far as the non-essentials go? Can the Lord be at work in charismatic churches? Yes! He is at work all over and it might not always be with people who are in our network. We need to recognize that.

I read this, and I thought of this example:

A young preacher comes into a church and he is fired up as he spends time there. Maybe after a few years, he wants to have a renewal and prays: Lord, let Your Kingdom come to this neighborhood in power. Let your grace spread. Let redemption come. May believers be built up.

He prays for a movement of the Holy Spirit. Then what he finds out is that a new preacher is called to a church five miles away and that church gets lit up with the glory of God. Has that first pastor's prayer been answered? Yes! Might there be something in the first pastor's insecurity that says: Lord, I meant to do it through me!

I don't want to get too transparent with you as though I have not done that in the past, but, yes, preachers often have insecurities too. Sometimes they have to fight and crucify their flesh when they see other pastors and churches and other leaders thriving and shining while they are in the middle of some doldrums.

The seed of Adam is so ridiculous in us. Sometimes we can be doing well, but see somebody else doing a little bit better, then rivalries come up. All those things need to be crucified. We are all on the same team.

Did you notice in your bulletin each week that we have you praying for a different church? I think this week you are asked to pray for Pastor Israel Gomez and Branches Church that the Lord would be put on display in him. We will be praying for all kinds of churches in our area, knowing that we are on a larger team and we must delight in how the Lord is working.

Somebody might say that we need to be careful about the term inclusive when we speak of the inclusive nature of unity, because there is such a thing as false teaching and heresy. There are false doctrines.

That would not be included in that circle of churches we want to see rise in prominence. There is a code of conduct that Christians are to follow. We are to walk in purity and holiness. Wherever there are groups of believers who spurn that, we would not desire for God's blessing to come.

However, wherever you have a church that is committed to the historic doctrines of the Christian faith—where they believe in the deity of Jesus Christ and where they believe in the inerrancy of Scripture and where they believe in salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, where they believe in the Trinity, where they believe the basic doctrines of the faith—we need to ask the Lord to bless them powerfully.

There is the inclusive nature to Christian unity that we need to rejoice in. Amen? Amen! So, let's be praying for the churches that are around us and ask the Lord to bless them and to do wonderful things through them.

These are a few lessons for us to learn and to take to heart. I pray that whatever is true and from His Word will seep into our hearts. It will be January the next time we pick up the Gospel of Luke

Let me give you a little bit of a preview to tantalize you for the next section that we will begin in the Gospel of Luke. Luke Chapter 9 and Verse 51:

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

That disciple path is where we go next. Let's close in a word of prayer.