

JESUS, ONE ON ONE

SPIRITUAL OPPOSITION 2/26/2023

LUKE 9:37-48

MAIN POINT

Today's message will be on Jesus' personal interaction with people (From the gospel of Luke).

One person at a time, One conversation at a time, One act of kindness at a time. Jesus taught us the importance of focusing on the person in front of us. Throughout the gospel of Luke, we see a record of Jesus' personal interactions with a variety of people. He demonstrated that impacting others begins by focusing on the person in front of you. Following His example, we learn to focus on one person at a time, engaging in one conversation at a time, demonstrating one act of kindness at a time.

The lesson will focus on: As we press forward with the kingdom of God, we must be prepared to meet opposition with faith.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What are some of the goals (financial, physical, relational, etc.) you have for you or your family over the next few years?

What kinds of things might stand in your way of seeing those goals come to pass?

What about spiritually? What are some of the threats to moving forward spiritually that you or your family might face?

As disciples of Jesus, our primary purpose here on earth is to work with Him for the extension of His kingdom. But as we do, we should recognize some of the threats that will come against us. By following Jesus' example and trusting in Him, we can overcome these threats and live faithfully for His kingdom.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 9:37-43.

What has evidently been going on while Jesus was gone? What opposition were the other disciples facing?

What are some possible reasons for Jesus' frustration with the disciples' failure to heal the boy from his physical condition?

Only three disciples accompanied Jesus to the mountain. The other nine had stayed behind. Evidently a man brought his child to them while Jesus was on the mountain. These disciples, however, couldn't exorcise the demon from the boy. Again, the disciples demonstrated weak faith. Jesus previously had given them "authority over all demons" (Luke 9:1). They failed to use that authority.

In the parallel account of this story in the gospel of Mark, Jesus' disciples ask Him why they were unable to cast out this demon and Jesus said, "this kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer" (Mark 9:29). When facing spiritual opposition, why is it important to dedicate ourselves to prayer?

What was Jesus trying to accomplish with His tough comments in verse 41?

Whom did Jesus rebuke when He spoke of a faithless and twisted generation?

How is a lack of prayer and being faithless connected?

When Jesus heard this report, He said, "faithless and twisted generation." He addressed this rebuke not only to the disciples but to all present. They missed a key principle. God bestows His power on those who believe that He can deal with issues that seem impossible to humans. Jesus asked, "How long am I to be with you and bear with you?" He served among them for a limited time. Soon they would be left without His human presence to pick them up when their faithlessness rendered them incompetent. Jesus commanded the man, "Bring your son here." This demonstrated His intention to act. Although He showed frustration with those present, Jesus' compassion toward the needy never waned.

How did the people respond to Jesus' healing (v. 43)? What do we learn about Jesus from His authority over demons?

Given that Jesus was able to do what His disciples were not, what can we learn from this story about how we should respond to spiritual opposition in our lives?

In casting out this and other demons, Jesus demonstrated that He has authority over the demons. In Mark 1, when Jesus cast out a single demon, it responds by asking, "Have you come to destroy us?" This one demon recognized who Jesus was and feared Him because He knew that Jesus was the "Holy One of God" who had the authority to defeat all the demons (v. 24). Jesus did not cast out demons simply because He wanted to show how great He was or even because He loved people. Jesus cast out demons because He is the Messiah, the Savior of the world. By casting out demons, Jesus was promising to do something about what is wrong with the world. Seeing that Jesus has authority over the demons reminds us that if we hope to overcome spiritual opposition in our lives, we must not look to ourselves but to the One who has authority over the demons and the power to save.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 9:43-48.

What does Jesus teach His disciples after healing the young boy (vv. 43-45)? What is the significance of this teaching?

In the aftermath of the healing of the demon-possessed boy, Jesus shifted gears and announced that He would soon be betrayed and captured. The disciples were confused by Jesus' words. Luke stated that it was concealed from them until after Jesus' death and resurrection. Meanwhile, their fear of Jesus' talk about betrayal and death kept them from asking Him what He meant.

How might our own pride keep us from focusing our lives on kingdom priorities?

In verses 46-48, how are the disciples gauging "greatness"? Why were they so concerned about which of them was greatest?

Why does Jesus use the child as an object lesson on true greatness in the kingdom?

Have you ever used your relationship with Jesus to achieve status, power, or earthly success? What happened?

The Twelve squabbled about who was greatest among them and demonstrated a jealous streak when an outsider used Jesus' name to do good. Jesus patiently revealed the truth to them. The question about who would be the greatest among the apostles came up more than once (22:24). Jesus knew the competitive pride that fostered the argument and was quick to point out that, spiritually, whoever was least (truly humble as a disciple of Christ) was great.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

How might devoting yourself to prayer help you overcome spiritual opposition?

How does your pride keep you from living with a kingdom mindset? What step might you take this week to humble yourself before the Lord?

How might we, as a group, strive to overcome our pride and actively serve each other?

PRAYER

Pray that we would look to Jesus as we face spiritual opposition. Ask God to help those in our group, our church, and our community to look to Christ for strength to overcome both pride and prayerlessness.

COMMENTARY

LUKE 9:37-48

9:37. The next day, or the day after His transfiguration experience on the mountain, Jesus came back to face yet another demanding circumstance. He encountered a large crowd. They wanted something from Jesus.

9:38. As Jesus met the crowd, a man cried out. This voice within the crowd addressed Jesus as “Teacher.” Use of this respectful title indicated the man’s acknowledgement of Jesus’ special nature. As with so many from the crowds that pressed Jesus, this man sought His help. The word look specifies a sincere concern such as God might show toward someone. A sense of urgency filled the man because this son was an only child. This fact highlighted even more the importance of the situation at hand.

9:39. While the father didn’t indicate the oppressive spirit was demonic, the larger context reveals that it was. The sudden shrieking was associated with demonic activity. Other symptoms resemble what we know about certain types of epileptic seizures, including convulsions accompanied by foaming at the mouth. The child suffered from more than just an illness; he suffered from a relentless demon-caused affliction. The father explained, “It hardly ever leaves him.”

9:40. The other nine had stayed behind. Evidently this man brought his child to them while Jesus was on the mountain. These disciples, however, couldn’t exorcise the demon from the boy. Again, the disciples demonstrated weak faith. Jesus previously had given them “authority over all the demons” (Luke 9:1). They failed to use that authority.

9:41-43. When He heard this report, Jesus rebuked not only the disciples but all present. They missed a key principle. God bestows His power on those who believe that He can deal with issues that seem impossible to humans. Jesus served among them for a limited time. Soon they would be left without His human presence to pick them up when their faithlessness rendered them incompetent. Although He showed frustration with those present, Jesus’ compassion toward the needy never waned. When the father brought the child closer, the demon knocked him down. In a last desperate attempt at control, the demon afflicted the boy again. The child collapsed from severe convulsions.

At this point, however, Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit. This classic confrontation between the healing power of God and the destructive power of the demon brought the incident to a head. Jesus won. He cured the boy. In a poignant demonstration of compassion, Jesus gave him back to his father. The drama of this event caught the attention of all present. They came away astonished at the greatness of God.

9:44-45. In the aftermath of the healing of the demon-possessed boy, Jesus shifted gears and announced that He would soon be betrayed (Gk paradidomi; “be handed over, delivered”) and captured. The disciples were confused by Jesus’ words. Luke stated that it was concealed from them until after Jesus’ death and resurrection. Meanwhile, their fear of Jesus’ talk about betrayal and death kept them from asking Him what He meant.

9:46-48. The question about who would be the greatest among the apostles came up more than once (22:24). Jesus knew the competitive pride that fostered the argument and was quick to point out that, spiritually, whoever was least (truly humble as a disciple of Christ) was great.