

To Make Disciples: Living for the Spread of His Glorious Grace

Luke 9:1-6

By [The Reverend Mr. Nathan D. Shurden](#)

*February 24, 2013
The Lord's Day Evening*

My heart is already encouraged tonight by hearing the report from Rex and from Gateway Rescue Mission. I trust that your heart is encouraged as well. It was one of my privileges in seminary, Rex, to be able to go and volunteer at the Gateway Rescue Mission on a regular occasion to teach at the chapel service that you regularly have there. And I have some of the greatest memories of that season of seeing God at work, both through His Word and through deed, which was happening right there in the ministry of Gateway Rescue Mission, so I pray your blessings on your ministry and continued growth to that important work. In fact, we're going to be talking about why that's so important, even as the Lord Jesus Christ instructs us this night from His Word, given to us in Luke chapter 9 verses 1 to 6. Before we read God's Word, let's once again pray and ask for His blessing.

Our Father in heaven, we come now before Your presence leaning into Your Word this night. We come asking You to once again feed us as You have fed us this morning. We are a people who are needy and who are hungry, but we need to feed on the bread that is more necessary than physical bread, even the bread of Your Word. In the Lord Jesus Christ, You tell us that You are the Bread of Life, indeed You are the manna that comes down from heaven. And this night we ask You to make Yourself known as we lean into Your Word. As we listen intently to Your instruction we ask that You would open up our ears to hear and our eyes to see, our hearts to believe and our wills to obey all that You would teach us from Your Word. Clear away from us this night any distraction and bind the evil one from this place who would want to snatch away the seed of the Gospel. We ask, Lord, that You would keep us centered, attentive upon everything that You would say, that we would hang on Your very words. So we now submit ourselves to You and we ask You to come and do exactly what Your will is and to accomplish it in the life of us Your people. We pray this in Jesus' name, amen.

It was just a couple of weeks ago I got the opportunity to visit Colombia, South America. The Lord, through His Church, the Presbyterian Church in America, the national presbytery of which I am a part, was invited to participate in a twelve day

tour in three cities in Colombia — Bogota, Santa Marta, and Riohacha — to spend twelve days there in the country, three of which would be spent in Bogota, three in Santa Marta, and three in Riohacha, for teaching conferences at local Reformed and Presbyterian and Independent congregations there. And it was a tremendous opportunity in large part by what the Lord did in my own life while I was there. Isn't that always the case? Those of you who have been on mission trips, you go to bless, you go to serve, and you come back having your own life and heart totally reoriented and transformed and turned upside-down in all of the right and good and appropriate ways? And that's exactly the case for me.

I was told when I went to Latin America, I'd been before but it had been a while, and as many of you in this room I am true, blue American, and North American at that, and I'm used to a very certain schedule and very particular things and I was told that I needed to be flexible when I went to South America, that it was going to operate a little bit differently, and I needed to be prepared to be surprised. I don't know how you prepare to be surprised because surprised, by its nature, is you're not prepared for it! And that was definitely the case when I was in Latin America. And I am pleased to say that planes arrived on time and people were prepared for us and they remembered that we were coming and things were in place, but I remember coming back from northern Bogota into a district called Suba where one of my brothers that I was with, a Latino brother who was translating for me while I was there, who was scheduled to preach that night in that congregation, all of a sudden turned to me because the pastor of that congregation was also in the car with us and we were an hour away from services starting and he says, "Why don't we let Nate preach tonight?" Now I'm going to be honest with you, these sermons don't just appear in my mind overnight! (laughter) I'm just going to be honest with you. I know preachers like that; they frustrate me, they really frustrate me. This is hard work for guys like me.

And as we were coming into Bogota I said, "You know, Lord, I'm afraid. I'm afraid. I've said everything I know in the last twelve days. I don't have anything else to offer. You're going to have to show up in some amazing way." But of course I smiled and I asked the butterflies to fly in formation as we were making our way into Bogota! And I turned to a passage and that night preached the Gospel, and by God's grace a young lady who sat on the front row came to know the Lord. And you know it's in that moment that you're reminded, "It's not about me. It's not about gifts, it's not about abilities, it's about the Spirit of God using the truth of God to transform lives." That's the story of the Gospel. It's the story of what discipleship is all about. As we lean into Luke chapter 9 and these first six verses here in this chapter we learn that it's not about the disciples, but it's about who the disciples are following. But He's called them into that work just as He's called you and me. So let's look at this passage together.

Luke chapter 9 verses 1 to 6:

And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over

all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. And he said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not have two tunics. And whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. And wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them." And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.

What an amazing passage that is, deceptively in some ways amazing, that God is leading His disciples whom He has just spent the last year making His way to the completion of His own mission, He has spent hours and hours in training these disciples and now it's time for them to go and do the work that He has been training them to do. That's a scary moment. That a moment when you realize you're in over your head. You know, it's sort of like church planting, when you realize that you think you know what it is that you're doing and then you're put in places where it becomes very clear that you have no idea what you're doing. By the way, don't tell my congregation that I don't know what I'm doing, but I don't know what I'm doing! And yet I've seen God show up, time and time again, in many ways, almost always, despite me.

THE PRIORITY OF DISCIPLE-MAKING

We see in this passage that there is a priority in disciple-making. The Lord Jesus Christ, as He has begun His ministry back in Luke chapter 4 in earnest, after the baptism and temptation, He then immediately in Luke chapter 5 calls these disciples into action and then in chapters 6 to 8 we see Him pouring His life into these disciples and preparing them for the ministry that is ahead. And here in chapter 9 and again in chapter 10, we see that it's time to get the birds out of the nest; it's time to go do the work that I've actually called you to do. And it's the very last thing, as we said this morning, that's on the lips of Jesus as He ascends into the heavenly places, and it's the pattern of the book of Acts, for the continued multiplication for those who are followers of Christ.

And you know who He used? Fishermen, carpenters, tax collectors. I want you to see who's not there — not M.Div. graduates. Just noting who's not there. Not those who have a PhD in Systematic Theology or Biblical Theology or those who have sat in Sunday school studiously for ten years and now feel like they're totally prepared for what's ahead. That's not who He's sending out, which means that most of us in this room are in good company. We're just the kind of people the Lord uses. Disciple-making is a priority of the Lord Jesus Christ. The priority is that as He goes and makes disciples of the disciples He's called them to go make other disciples and thus the story of the church is written. This is God's plan and there's not an alternate. This is what He does; this is who He is. T is the message and the Word that He has entrusted us with.

THE PATTERN OF DISCIPLE MAKING

But not only do we see that it's a priority in this passage but we see that there's a pattern in this passage. "What does disciple-making look like?" challenged you even this morning to think about what it means to be a disciple; this evening we're talking about what it means to make disciples. And actually it's a blessing to have Gateway Rescue Mission with us because what we see in this passage is that it's a pattern of Word and deed; it's a pattern of Word and deed ministry. We're told in verse 1, "He called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over demons and to cure diseases" — to do and to meet the physical needs of those in whom they were coming in contact with and the spiritual needs and "to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal." Word and deed ministry. Declaring the kingdom of God with words and displaying the power of the kingdom of God with deeds.

This is exactly the work that we are called to, not one or the other, but to both. This is why when Jesus comes He comes and He preaches but He doesn't come and just preach. He comes and He immediately meets the needs that present themselves before Him. And He doesn't just try to cast them off in another direction. He doesn't say someone else is more chiefly responsible for them. We see the in-breaking of the kingdom of God right there in the midst of His healings, right there in the midst of His exorcisms. We see Him breaking the power of the Fall down. The reason you get sick and the reason that your body hurts — you know I'm realizing this. You know I know you don't think so but I'm getting old. And this is how you know you're getting old — you hurt yourself sleeping. (laughter) I don't know what I'm doing at night but I'm waking up with more pain than I used to wake up with. Something is happening in the middle of the night; I'm not sure what it is. But the recognition is that that is a sign of the fact that I'm like everybody else — fallen, broken. Jesus, by displaying His power in curing and in healing is displaying the fact that He has power to reverse the effects of the curse. And when we feed those who are hungry, when we care for those who are in need, we also are walking in line with the displaying of the kind of kingdom that Jesus brings, right alongside the proclaiming of the kingdom of God, articulating beautifully what is this power of the Gospel that is pushing back on the evil one's domain. We see that this is the pattern in disciple-making.

PARTNERSHIP IN DISCIPLE-MAKING

But thirdly, we see that there's a partnership in disciple-making. I am very encouraged by this. Look at verse 1. He's called the twelve together. He says similarly in Luke 10 verse 1, "And the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them out ahead of Him two by two into every town and place where He Himself was about to go." I don't know if this is true of you but I get nervous doing

disciple-making on my own. It's scary to do it on your own. In fact, in some ways, I'm kind of glad that we're scared to do it on our own because we're not meant to. We've been called into community for a reason. We need partnership. We need the accountability. We need the wisdom that comes from walking with someone who's beside us who can see from a different perspective, who can speak into our lives, who can pray with us, who can weep with us, who can rejoice with us when we see the kingdom of God, someone who can be, as it were, our reflector, telling us what it is that they're experiencing, how they're seeing it, being creative with how it is we might break-in new in-roads for the expansion of the kingdom of God.

That's one of the things that struck me in Latin America. Everywhere I went I spoke a strange tongue; no one understood me. And I couldn't say anything. And trust me, that's difficult for a man of my nature! It's difficult to not be able to just say something to someone. I needed a translator. I needed someone to come alongside me and to be my Aaron in a very real sense, to be the mouthpiece of what it is that God wanted to say. And I was going over sermons and lessons ahead of time and asking him, "Hey, I'm saying this but is that going to translate? Is that going to make sense to the culture, to the community? Is this the right way to communicate it? Do you think it's structured well for this particular audience?" Without his partnership I would have been lost. I would have been lost. And oftentimes he even educated me on exactly how I should create an apt word for this particular setting at this particular time. I was dependent.

But do you know it's no different from right now because if you're truly hearing the Word of God you're not hearing my voice; you're hearing the Holy Spirit. It's only He who can translate this. It's only He who actually penetrates our hearts. We are utterly dependent. And when we partner, that becomes just very clear that we are those who are in need of each other. This is a community calling. I want to challenge you — find a partner. If you have someone in your life, there's someone who the Lord has burdened you with regards to sharing the Gospel or walking with someone over a period of time and building a relationship, the right kind of external pressure comes when you invite someone in accountability with you. Because when you tell them what it is that the plan is and what the hope is and you ask them to pray, it's almost as if you have to do it, and that's, I think, the point. When Jesus sends these disciples out two by two they need each other. This calling is meant to be together.

This partnership really displays what the real power in disciple-making is. And I really want to see this free you. I want to see this encourage you. When we see disciple-making priority, yes, clearly, when we see the pattern of Word and deed, when we see the partnership of doing this as a community together, we also need to say, "Where's the power going to come from? Where's the effectiveness going to come from?" Let me tell you, the Lord Jesus teaches us all about that here in this passage. Jesus, in chapter 8, has just calmed the storm, the waves, and He's shown His power over nature. He's just healed Jairus' daughter and

He's shown His power over flesh and over disease. He's just cast out the Gerasene demoniac's demon and He's shown that He has power of the spiritual world, over the principalities and even the kingdom of the evil one. And then I want you to see something astonishing. Verse 1 He says, "Jesus gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases and to preach the kingdom of God." Astonishing. The Savior of the world, the Son of God, the one who is omnipotent, who has just displayed His power over every sphere, now takes His disciples aside before He sends them out and He commissions them with His power, commissions them with His power. You know what Jesus says this at the end of Matthew 28, before He sends them out and says, "Go and make disciples" do you remember what He says? "All authority has been given to Me on heaven and earth." It's meant to assure you. It's meant to assure you. "You go out in the name of the One who controls everything."

You see the confidence that comes with that in disciple-making, that we are those who live in the power of Jesus, and we give away the power of Jesus in discipleship to others and we see His kingdom making a ripple effect all throughout our lives and our community. We see resurrections happening, we see regeneration taking place in hearts, and we see the kingdom of God slowing but surely, like yeast leavening a lump, taking over an area, even a geographical area, because the Spirit of God is working through His people who are saying "Yes" to His call and are resting not on their own competencies but on divine dependency. You see, that's the power. We tend to think that we're going to be fruitful because we have a lot of knowledge. Knowledge is great; it's wonderful. It's a tool in the hand of God, but your smarts is not a guarantee that you are going to be effective in the work of kingdom building. We think we're going to be effective because we have great gifts. It's no guarantee that your gift is actually going to advance the kingdom of God. We think that because we have the resources that we can continue to throw money and people and energy at this. "This wall's going to come down. This bulwark is going to hold fast. We're going to accomplish this because we have what it takes." And Jesus is saying quite clearly, "This power comes from somewhere else."

And the more that you are actually relying on the powers of the flesh, actually the weaker you become in the work of the Spirit. But the more that you are emptied, emptied of the things of the flesh, the more that you are abandoning and despairing of the things of the flesh and the more you are resting, even relaxing into the grace of God in the power of the Lord Jesus Christ, you become a receptacle for His work, a conduit for what it is that He wants to accomplish in the world. You see, in Acts chapter 1 verse 8, Jesus actually tells the people of God, "Don't go out until you receive the power of the Holy Spirit, until He has come upon you. Then you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and not a moment before. Not a moment before. It's in My power that you go." And it's in the power of this Gospel, Romans 1:16, "The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation." Do you know the Gospel? Can you share the Gospel? Can you articulate the Gospel? You have the power of God with you. Are you one of His disciples abiding in His

Spirit? He promises He never leaves you nor forsakes you. The power of God is with you. The power of God is with you. What are you waiting for? It's not the readiness of the power of the flesh that's going to accomplish the will of God. It's going to be readiness in the Spirit of God in the truth of God that accomplishes the building of His kingdom and you have that if you're one of His. He's equipped you; He's trained you. He's readied you.

You see, this power of the flesh Paul is very concerned about. He actually says it in 1 Corinthians 1:17, actually a passage that as a preacher haunts me a bit. He says, "For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the Gospel," and notice how he is to preach this power of God unto salvation, the Gospel — "not with words of eloquent wisdom." You would think, "Of course he's going to preach it with eloquent words of wisdom! Why would you not do that? After all, it is the power of God; it's the most glorious message of all." But here's Paul's concern. "Lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power." He says that there's a human preaching of the Word of God that's relying upon giftedness and eloquence that can move a crowd, that can make people like you, that can make you winsome. And he says, "There's nothing necessarily of the power of God in it."

We know this because one of the greatest evangelists in the early church was a woman who was never formally trained in sharing the Gospel. She's known as the Samaritan woman in John chapter 4. She comes to know the Lord Jesus Christ after a theological discussion that she has engaged Him in and we're told that she left her water jar and she went away into the town and she said to the people, "Come and see a Man who told me all that I ever did. And many Samaritans from that town believed in Him because of the woman's testimony." Now here's what I want you to hear from the text. She didn't come to know the Lord Jesus Christ and go, "I need to go to RTS Jackson to get a degree. I need to sit back in Sunday school for the next five years before I say anything." She, in being touched by the grace of God, is overwhelmed, tongue loosened, and babbling about what it is He's accomplished. The Lord is drawing His people to Himself through her.

Friends, do you see the power of God? Do you see how it works? It's when you're emptied and full of Him that you become an instrument, a mighty instrument, in the hand of God because you have become full of His power. That's what He's granted you. That's what He's granted you in the Gospel and within the Spirit. He wants the disciples to be totally clear in this, so clear in this. He doesn't want them to get confused. You see, this was my struggle that night driving down from the Suba district. Immediately I have nothing to say. I wasn't going to come up with neat terms or phrases in the moment. I wasn't going to "Wow" anyone. I really felt like, "I could totally bomb this thing" and I don't like feeling unprepared. What about you? I don't like it. I don't choose it. I don't choose it. But it was very clear that the Spirit of the Lord was putting this on my plate and He was saying, "How much do you trust Me with My power? I don't

need you to do the work but I've called you into the work because I love you. Do you trust Me with it? Do you trust Me with it or do you trust the organization of your message? Do you trust your way, your gifting? Do you trust your tone of voice or your winsomeness of what you think that you have? Trust Me, it's nothing in My kingdom. The Samaritan woman is a better evangelist than you and she's never been in preaching class before."

You see, that's the Spirit of God saying that. That's His words to me. He says, "Nate, I want you to walk by Me because I have something planned this night to accomplish by My Spirit and I just want you to watch and be amazed at what I'll do." You see, that's how God works. And He says, "Disciples, I want you to know this. If you're going to walk in My power you're going to have to walk in My provision. So let's just be really clear. When you go out on mission, you're not going to be able to take any money for your journey, not staff, no bag, no extra tunic. You're not going to take anything with you." You know this is Jesus' "Don't Take to Camp" list. You know that list? Twin Lakes folks in here, you know that list? You know, don't take to camp — drugs and grenades and AK-47's. You know, leave all those at home, but you know, grab the sleeping bag and the toothbrush. Well here's what's fascinating about Jesus' list — everything that would be on the "Take to Camp" list is off Jesus' "Take to Camp" list.

If you're going to go for a journey, you're going to take your staff. The staff is a symbol of protection. You're going to take your money and your resources so if you ever get in a bind, you're going to take a little bread and a little something to drink in case you get hungry. You're going to make arrangements before you go so that everything is in place. And Jesus says, "I don't want you to do any of that. I don't want you to take the things of the world with you as if your confidences in the journey was you being able to organize your trip. I want you to instead be taking the Maker of the world with you. That's Me. And it just so happens that I own everything in the world and if you seek first the kingdom of God, all these things will be added unto you. You ready to go?"

That's the call to make disciples. You see, that's why you're never more ready than where you are right now. Are you asking that question? You know, "When I get to this point in my life, then I'm going to be something for God. I'm going to start using my time and my energy and my resources when everything else is taken care of." And aren't you just stockpiling staffs and possessions and bags and bread as if He might not provide tomorrow? You know the people of Israel struggled with this. You're not alone in this. You remember they wanted to hoard the manna in case it didn't fall the next day. They were amazed every day. He did it. He did it again. He said that He was going to do it and He did it again. You know they didn't have any bread. All of their gold had been taken from them. You know they built their calf, that terrible mistake, and everything had been taken from them. They're walking in the wilderness — no food, no water — and so God says, "Guess what? I'm going to rain bread and I'm going to give you water from a rock and your shoes are never going to wear out for forty years and your

clothes are going to be like new the day I gave them to you because I want you to know this — you don't live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. If I have said it, it is done, it is done.”

Friends, that is still true today. That has not changed. And today, by His grace, He's telling you, “Don't look at that increasing checking line or decreasing checking line, don't look at the resources or the comforts to be able to say, “Okay we're ready now to be able to make the step that we're in.” It's in taking a godly risk, that's really no risk at all, because God has already told you He's provided with every step that you take. Do you see His provision? Do you see His power? That you should be inflamed with this pattern? It's His overwhelming priority. He's going to do what He says He's going to do. And to boot, He's going to never leave you nor forsake you. He's going to be right there with you. Well this is deeply encouraging, because when you get to that place where you don't know how to answer someone and you fumble all over yourself or that time that you think you really nailed it and nothing seemed to happen, you know that some sow and some water and some reap the harvest but really He's the Lord of the harvest and He will accomplish all that He has set His mind to and the gates of hell will not prevail against the advance of His Church and you're a part of that answer. And so by God's grace a few more laborers will be in the fields, a few more souls encouraged to step out in faith and go somewhere that you've never gone before, and that you don't this servant slip in one ear and out the other — and we'll know if it does by what we do with it and how God by His grace will lead you and guide you.

So let me challenge you — pray, pray. How are you going to put this in practice in your life? And then plan, plan how you're going to take steps to take godly risks over how it is that God's going to provide to call you into the work of making disciples. And then let me encourage you, tell somebody about it, partner with somebody. Draw them into relationship with you. Confess to them the fact that you would never dream of doing this before but some silly preacher came one Sunday night and he said something about this and all of a sudden you feel like you need to do something crazy like share the Gospel and seek out others for the purposes of advancing His truth — volunteering at the Gateway Rescue Mission, going on a short-term mission trip, whatever that answer looks like for you, I'm not too concerned about what it looks like, only that you answer it, by God's grace.

Friends, this is an adventure and you and I are in it and we know where it leads. And when you follow Christ, the best really is yet to come because the end is told you ahead of time. So don't live by these eyes of sight; live by the eyes of faith. See the most beautiful glory of Jesus and in doing so let it motivate you to do the work of making disciples. Let's pray He'll do that right now.

Father in heaven, You're at work in this place. You are speaking to Your people and the people are listening. So Father we ask that this moment not be lost at the

conclusion of hymn and the exiting out of the doors, because this is the beginning of a mission of a new day dawning in the hearts of Your people that they see, "This Lord Jesus Christ has called me into a work that He has promised to bear fruit and I will, in assurance of His promises, say 'Yes' to His mission." And Father, I ask that You raise up an army of disciple-makers in this room, the likes of which this city would not be able to turn away and would be able to say, 'The Spirit of God is working over there at First Presbyterian Church because those folks, they're stripped of possessions and provisions and confidences and self. They're going forth like a Samaritan woman and they're just sharing their testimony and they actually believe something might happen" — and something does, because You've promised it! And so Father we ask You now, by Your grace, settle us into this work and compel us by Your love. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen.

Let's stand for the blessing of God.

Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

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