

“WITH HIS EYES ON JERUSALEM...”
LUKE 9:51-56

It seems inconceivable, but Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, the God-Man, God incarnate, was rejected by Israel when He came to be her Messiah and to provide redemption from sin.

- ✓ His message was rejected by Herod when Herod imprisoned and beheaded John the Baptist (3:20)
- ✓ He was rejected in His first sermon when the crowds wondered how “Joseph’s son” could preach in such a way (4:22), made Him unwelcome (4:24), and in a rage attempted to kill Him (4:28-29)
- ✓ When He forgave the lame man’s sins, the Scribes and Pharisees said He was a blasphemer (5:21)
- ✓ The Pharisees and scribes grumbled that He ate with Levi (tax collectors and sinners, 5:30)
- ✓ The Pharisees claimed He was a Sabbath law-breaker (6:2ff)
- ✓ The Pharisees and lawyers rejected John the Baptist and His message (7:30ff)
- ✓ The Pharisee Simon hated His compassion to a woman who was a “sinner” (7:39)
- ✓ The Gerasene people rejected Him after He healed “Legion” and asked Him to leave (8:37)
- ✓ The people rejected Him by calling Him a prophet, but not the Messiah (9:18-19)
- ✓ At the end of His Galilean ministry, Jesus called the people ashamed and unbelieving (9:26, 41)

And in the passage before us this morning, we see the expansion of Jesus’ ministry to those who were perceived to be “outside” true Israel. The Galileans rejected Him, so He expanded His ministry to the Samaritans. And they also rejected Him. It’s a familiar story. Christ was rejected. Christ would be rejected still more. And He will still be rejected today. Yet, Christ was resolute in His commitment to go to the cross.

He was resolute to go to the cross because it was all part of God’s eternal plan of redemption. And that plan was filled with Christ’s compassion and gentleness with sinners. He yearned (and yearns) to save sinners.

THE REJECTION OF CHRIST REVEALS THE COMPASSION OF CHRIST.

Christ’s rejection is good news for us because His rejection not only leads Him to the cross, but the cross was the eternal plan of the Triune Godhead. So His rejection makes the way for our acceptance in salvation. That acceptance is the ultimate manifestation of His compassion; in this passage we see **four expressions** of the compassion of Christ...

- 1. Christ’s Compassion for SINNERS (v. 51)**
- 2. Christ’s Compassion for His “ENEMIES” (vv. 52-53)**
- 3. Christ’s Compassion for His DISCIPLES (vv. 54-55)**
- 4. Christ’s Compassion for the UNREACHED (v. 56)**

1. Christ's Compassion for SINNERS (v. 51)

- Luke 9:51 begins a new section in the Gospel — after more than two years, Jesus is leaving Galilee. Luke is compressing the story of Christ and beginning to give much more detail (**chart**).
 - ✓ It is about 90 miles in a direct line from Capernaum to Jerusalem — perhaps 3-4 days. But about 3-4 months elapse on this journey, so it is about much more than just the journey. Jesus has agenda.
 - ✓ This section (9:51 – 19:44) is mostly only in Luke's gospel. It includes much more of Jesus' teaching: there are 20 parables as well as many shorter proverbial sayings. There is instruction of the Twelve as well as refutation of His opponents. There are few miracles.
 - ✓ There are at least 20 place names, many of which were places where Jesus traveled.
 - ✓ Jesus has an agenda, and the focus of Luke's Gospel shifts to reflect that purpose: instead of being attentive to Jesus' coming, now Luke is focused on Jesus' going. Cf. **v. 51**.
- **When the days were approaching** (lit., "fulfilled") **for His ascension...** is building on the theme of fulfillment — Christ is the Son of Man who has fulfilled God's promises (**1:1**). Here Luke is affirming that certain events had been fulfilled and accomplished by Christ, necessitating the next phase of min.
 - ✓ Specifically, what Christ was anticipating was **His ascension**.
 - ✓ This is a unique word in the NT — it means "taken up" and could refer to resurrection or ascension.
 - ✓ In **vv. 22, 26, and 31** He is thinking about all aspects of redemption — cross, resurrection, ascension. And a related word is used usually to refer to going to Heaven (Acts 1:2, 11, 22).
 - ✓ All those events are also in view in the next phrase, **He was determined to go to Jerusalem**. Lit., He "set His face" — He had His eyes on Jerusalem and would not be distracted from it. Luke is even more emphatic — "He Himself was determined..." Others might have looked away, but not Christ.
 - ✓ The cross has always been on Christ's mind (4:18-19) but it is at the forefront now. The training of the Twelve is just about finished; the Son of Man has been revealed; the cross is looming.
 - ✓ The cross was part of the Father's decree (**22:22; 24:25**); Christ embraces and turns to that cross now.
 - ✓ While Luke is often called a "travelogue" these references aren't really designed to give us a chronology or geography of Jesus' ministry — it's to give us a theological theme — salvation made available through the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ.
 - ✓ And He is going to the cross because of His compassion for sinners; they reject Him and *still* He makes their redemption possible. He is a compassionate Savior; He sees troubles and takes pity...
 - Lk. 7:13 — When the Lord saw her, He felt compassion for her, and said to her, "Do not weep."
 - Lk. 15:20 — So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.
 - Mt. 9:36 — Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd.

- Mt. 14:14 — When He went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and felt compassion for them and healed their sick.
 - Mt. 20:34 — Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight and followed Him.
 - Jesus sees suffering — even suffering that is the result of sin (Lk. 15) and is compassionate. He is no dispassionate, harsh, vindictive God. He made us and He knows all the frailties connected to our creation — and He moves towards us in kind compassion, even at the cost of becoming the sin-bearer of all our sins (2 Cor. 5:21).
- Despite the rejection of Nazareth, Galilee, and even the Samaritan village in this section, the purposes of God are being fulfilled. Rejection of Christ is sorrowful, yet it was necessary for the ultimate fulfillment of the cross. “Divine design is tied to these events...Nothing is happening by accident.” [Bock]

2. Christ's Compassion for His “ENEMIES” (vv. 52-53)

- Leaving Capernaum, Jesus sets His attention south on Jerusalem, and makes plans to go through Samaria. And **He sent messengers on ahead of Him...**
 - ✓ Generally this is understood to mean something like making arrangements for lodging, etc.
 - ✓ But it's unlikely this is only a logistical trip. Before Christ began His ministry, John the Baptist was sent out to preach to prepare the people. Similarly, Jesus sent the Twelve through Galilee to preach and heal (9:1-2ff) and He will shortly do the same with the 70 (10:1-2ff).
 - ✓ It seems most likely that whatever they did in preparation that they were also preaching that the Son of Man, the Messiah, had arrived and the people needed to repent.
 - ✓ There were two remarkable aspects to this sending...
- The first remarkable part of this sending is that it began in an unnamed **village in Samaria**.
 - ✓ The priority for Jesus and the Twelve was Israel (Mt. 10:5-7). But that didn't mean that other ethnicities were excluded. The gospel is for all people (Gen. 12:3; Jn. 3:16).
 - ✓ Jesus and the Twelve took an unexpected and direct route from Galilee to Jerusalem (map).
 - ✓ This intentional venture into Samaria was for the express purpose of expanding gospel reach.
 - ✓ It's helpful to remember the history of the Samaritans (though it is not completely clear):
 - In 722 B.C. Assyria took the 10 northern tribes of Israel into captivity and left some Assyrians in Israel, specifically Samaria (2 Kings 17:24).
 - The Samaritans evidently intermarried with the Assyrians and worshipped pagan gods (v. 29).
 - They developed their own translation of the Pentateuch and rejected the rest of the OT and then built their own center of worship in Samaria around 400 B.C., because the Israelites refused to let them worship in Jerusalem (that Samaritan temple was destroyed in 128 B.C.).
 - So while they originated in Israel, Israelites considered them as ethnic “half-breeds” and

religious apostates and refused to have anything to do with them. There was great animosity between the Jews and the Samaritans. (One writer noted that the Samaritans were part of the daily prayer of the Israelites — that the Samaritans would not enter eternal life!)

- Jews would often avoid traveling through Samaria (going on the trans-Jordan instead) and likewise, the Samaritans would not travel to Jerusalem, or north into Galilee.
- ✓ So when Jesus went to the Samaritans, He was going to “the enemy.” Even more, He *purposed* to go to the enemy. And for the second time (Jn. 4:4ff)!
- ✓ It’s remarkable that Christ made His enemies the focus of His ministry. He chose a political zealot, a tax collector, and a betrayer to be among His Twelve. He went to the Samaritans. He healed the Roman centurion’s son (7:1ff). He cared for disenfranchised women (7:11ff). He healed lepers (5:12ff). He cared for children (8:40ff; 9:37ff). He commanded the disciples to love their enemies (6:27). And He showed them how to love enemies.
- ✓ And aren’t you glad that He loved enemies — because you and I also were His enemies (Rom. 5:10)?
- ✓ Do we also reflect the character of Christ by loving those who are our enemies? Are we compassionate toward them, understanding that they are trapped in sin and need a Savior?
- The second remarkable aspect of this sending is that Jesus was rejected. Again.
 - ✓ Luke says **they did not receive them** (the messengers). The societal norms of the day said that the people should have at least provided basic hospitality (food & shelter) for the men. They didn’t.
 - ✓ Luke gives the reason they didn’t receive Jesus — **because He was traveling to Jerusalem**.
 - Notice that the messengers came ahead of Christ (v. 52), meaning Christ presumably wasn’t there yet. But they did not receive *Him*. They rejected *Him* (not them).
 - Most commentators say Christ was not rejected for His messianic claims, but because He and the disciples were going to worship in Jerusalem. “They weren’t going to help Jews worship.”
 - However, the Samaritans knew Christ because Christ *had* preached there — and they believed (Jn. 4:39). Now we don’t know in what village He preached earlier and what village rejected Him in this section, but we know that even without the internet, the news of Christ spread in other locals so quickly (5:15), it seems that Jesus and His message would have been well-known.
 - And the disciples who were sent ahead undoubtedly were preaching similarly to Christ (e.g., 9:2; 10:2). So the rejection must have been related at least partly to the Messianic message.
 - And the tone of this entire section is about the rejection of Christ as the Son of Man (e.g., vv. 58-62, 10:10-12, 13-15, etc.).
 - ✓ They rejected Christ because they did not want Christ as Savior.
 - ✓ Just as Jesus’ ministry in Galilee started with rejection in His hometown of Nazareth, now the start of His expanded ministry is also rejected among the Samaritans.
- But don’t miss this — though He is rejected, He is compassionate to His “enemies” — and He seeks them for the purpose of declaring the message of salvation. Rejection did not deter Him preaching.

3. Christ's Compassion for His DISCIPLES (vv. 54-55)

- It is an understatement to say that the disciples were indignant about the Samaritan rejection.
 - ✓ **James and John** spoke up for the other disciples. [Remember that while John was later known as “the apostle of love,” that these brothers were known as “the sons of thunder,” evidently for their rather forceful and opinionated personalities.]
 - ✓ So they ask Jesus — **Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from Heaven...**
 - ✓ That’s an incredibly strong statement (like an imprecatory prayer). But it wasn’t completely wrong; there were parts of what they said that were commendable:
 - They were somewhat humble — they were making a request and they did recognize that Christ was **Lord** and had a right to deny their request.
 - They were defending the righteousness of Christ and God. And that is the nature of righteous anger — we get angry about the things that anger God and about things that denigrate and defy the holiness and truthfulness of God. And that is why they were angry.
 - They exhibited significant faith — “If Jesus approves, fire will fall!” Perhaps they are thinking of the authority that had been granted them and they experienced in **9:1ff.**
 - They did recognize that rejection of God will ultimately result in judgment that is fiery (and eternal). They understood something of eternal condemnation (**Mt. 13:40ff.**).
 - ✓ However, they obviously misunderstood some realities as well (a second time, cf. **v. 49**)—
 - When they said this they probably were thinking about Elijah calling down fire on the soldiers of Ahaziah (2 Kings 1:9-12) and given that they’d just seen Elijah (v. 30), they thought that this would be the time to act similarly.
 - The second part of verse 55 and the first part of v. 56 were almost certainly added later by copyists — the copyists “filled in” the details of the rebuke. (It was likely close to what was said.)
 - They misunderstood the purpose of Christ and the timing of His judgment. There *will* be judgment from Christ (Rev. 19-20). But that judgment was not part of the first advent (cf. **19:10; Jn. 3:17; 12:47**). The first advent is about the offer of forgiveness and Kingdom.
- So Jesus **rebuked** James and John. Jesus corrects the two. They have been with Him for at least two years and perhaps we might think “they should have known...” But Jesus is patient with them, correcting them and redirecting them.
- We might gain at least three lessons here —
 - ✓ **Be patient with all men.** Sanctification and maturity don’t happen in a straight line. It takes time and there will be ups and downs for everyone. Be patiently gracious when people don’t do what you think they should be doing (and correct them gently (2 Tim. 2:25). Even though He was rejected by the Samaritan village and the disciples were hasty, Jesus was not retaliatory; He modeled what He taught (**6:29**). We are also called to do the same (**1 Pt. 2:23**).

- ✓ **Cultivate Christ's heart for the gospel and evangelism.** The disciples were anxious for judgment; Christ longed for conversion. He came to seek and save the lost (ch. 15). His ministry was focused on methodically preaching the gospel throughout Israel (and Samaria!). Do I weep over those who are rebels, but lost (19:41-42)? "Some want to live within the sound of *church* or chapel bell. I want to run a rescue shop within a yard of hell" (C. T. Studd).
- ✓ **Honor and defend Christ, but don't be vindictive.** The disciples weren't fit to be eternal judges. And neither are you and I. Our finite knowledge precludes us from serving as Judge. So we can tell others about Christ but we are not fit to judge others (eternally) when they reject Christ. You can trust the Lord with that judgment. He will take care of it (Rom. 12:19-21).

4. Christ's Compassion for the **UNREACHED** (v. 56)

- Luke concludes the story with a simple, ***and they went on to another village.***
 - ✓ We don't know the name of the rejecting village and we don't know the name of the next village.
 - ✓ But we do know that the purpose of Christ was to preach the gospel to other cities (4:43).
 - ✓ And He was faithful to do that. Even when He had been rejected. "Jesus is not at all daunted. His traveling band continues on its way to another village, which may or may not have been Samaritan. It makes no difference for Luke's telling. What is important is that the journeying continues." [Nolland] He went because it was His purpose and because there were some who had not yet heard.
 - ✓ He was compassionate to the people who had not heard.
 - ✓ Why do people give up their comfortable lives and go to hostile places with the gospel (Beirut, Iran and Iraq, Dubai, Indonesia? Because, like Christ, they long for people who don't have the gospel and don't have a Bible to know the truth of Christ's salvation.
- Here is an exhortation for us — some will reject the gospel when you tell them. Then go to the next. Our duty is not to convert sinners — only the Spirit of God can do that. Our duty is to go and tell. That's what Jesus did. That's what we do.

CONCLUSION:

Forty years ago, in one of my first classes in seminary, my church history professor said something like, "Show me a church that doesn't love missions and evangelism and I'll show you a church that is dying."

We might also add, if a church has no love for evangelism and missions, then it is a church that has no compassion and is not like Christ. Even when Christ was rejected, He was compassionate. He planned, worked for and died for His enemies so that they might know and believe in Him. Might we have similar compassion.

BENEDICTION: Jude 24-25