



# CAPITOL COMMISSION

## Seeking Jesus (Luke 6:17-19)

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With the selecting of the twelve by Jesus, these men become his chosen representatives. They are those who will carry on his ministry and bear the responsibility to establish his community of followers. However, as quickly as they are mentioned, just as quickly will they disappear from Luke's narrative and fade into the background. The author will on occasion mention the apostles in the following chapters, but it is not until Jesus gives them power and authority over demons and to cure diseases that we hear of them again. They are not mentioned as a group or in terms of the office they possess until they are sent out on a short term missionary trip to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. In this period between their appointment to their apostolic office and empowerment to carry out its duties we find them interspersed among the other "disciples." From this we can deduce this truth, while the Twelve were given a special office with unique authority and power for a specific period of time at the culmination of the ages, the expectations of piety and purpose do not differ among all those who seek to follow Jesus. Also in our text we find, this desire to hear Jesus, to be healed by him, or to simply touch him is palpable. Jesus' appeal was far-reaching through the regions of Judea, and he willingly gave himself completely to those who would seek after him. Jesus' servants heart was on full display for those in his company of committed followers, and those in future generations who would seek after him.

*Luke 6:17-19 - (17) And he came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, (18) who came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. And those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. (19) And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all.*

### THE CROWDS GATHER

*And he came down with them* – Jesus descends from the mountain with the Twelve, his newly chosen apostles. He arrives at a level place and joins the crowd of his disciples, the group from which the Twelve had been previously chosen, along with a great multitude of people. It is here that we lose sight of the apostles as individuals or as part of this specific group. They become part of the larger contingent of committed followers of Jesus and fade into the background as Luke's emphasis remains upon the teaching and ministry of Jesus. We should not conclude from this observation that Jesus did not maintain an intimate relationship with his chosen apostles. However, those chosen by Jesus for this special task were disciples first. This is the standard expectation he sets for all who would come after him, since there are not different levels of commitment. It is the same cost, the same call, and the same purpose regardless of one's office, gifts, or authority.

*A great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people* – There are two distinct groups identified in this account. The disciples of Jesus, those committed to his teaching are described as a great crowd. As we begin to consider the vast amount of people faithful to Jesus, we begin to catch a glimpse as to the cause of this growing hostility toward him. When one combines the authority of his teaching to his popularity with the masses, it is clear that Jesus became a significant threat to the religious establishment. Not only is there a large gathering of disciples around Jesus, we also find an even larger multitude of people congregating together on this level place. The multitude's purpose in coming was to have their physical needs met. Even though this horde of people sought Jesus from a selfish purpose, he would make sure they were exposed to his teachings. So the multitudes come to Jesus not as a result of hype or some ingenious gimmick. They come because of the impact he had on individuals and they leave transformed into people eager to share this good news with others.

*From all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon* – It should be noted that Luke is communicating several concepts from this brief statement. The first is the large geographical area from which this multitude is being drawn. Judea is a region in the south which included the tribe of Judah and Benjamin when Israel was divided into two kingdoms during the reign of King Rehoboam, son of Solomon. Jerusalem the capitol of the nation remained the capitol for the southern kingdom and center of worship for the people of God. Those faithful to God would make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem in order to worship at the Temple in accordance with God's law. So we find that the multitude was being drawn from as far south as Judea and Jerusalem. Jesus influence was also felt to the far north of this region. The city of Sidon lay within the lot of Asher, the northern most tribe, but was never subdued. King Solomon entered into a matrimonial alliance with the Sidonians, through which their form of idolatrous worship gained a foothold in Israel.<sup>1</sup> These groups came to Jesus not because it was convenient, but chose to travel great distances that they might meet Jesus. Their personal desperation jumps off the page as we consider the difficulty of seeking out a man who is teaching and healing in an unfamiliar part of the country and who held to no specific schedule or itinerary. What must never be forgotten is the desperation of the human heart and the lengths that people will go in order to get their needs met.

Secondly, we see the spiritual distinction that would resonate in the minds of Luke's audience. Not only was Jesus drawing people from a large geographical area, he was also attracting people from varying spiritual perspectives. When Tyre or Sidon is mentioned the immediate association would have been that of an idolatrous nation. The opposite assumption

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would have come to mind at the mention of Jerusalem, the place of the spiritual elite and the citadel of true worship to God. Jesus' teaching and ministry reaches across the broad landscape of religious experience. This was not a local phenomenon, or geared to a specific cross-section of people. It is a message to be proclaimed to all men and women everywhere, that they may respond to God's truth in belief, and seek to live on the basis of its implications.

### THE DISCIPLES AND MULTITUDES

*Who came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases* - What we find in distinguishing between the disciples and multitudes are different levels of connection to Jesus. These different levels of connection flow from the different purposes that each group has in pursuing him. It does not track that the disciples of Jesus, those who had travelled with him and from whom he chose twelve to be apostles would still have the need to be healed of diseases. We had already learned in Luke 4:38 that Jesus went to Simon's house and healed his mother-in-law. From this we can conclude, those who were seeking Jesus in order to be healed by him were those who had not known him previously. As stated above, the multitude's purpose in seeking after Jesus was selfish in nature. They were those who needed to be healed and they sought out him because they had become aware of his miraculous ability. This motivation does not preclude their desire to hear from Jesus, but it would seem that their driving force is to have their needs met. This level of connection to Jesus thinks only about what I can get from a relationship with him.

The other level of connecting to Jesus is that of the disciples. While we cannot glean much insight from this specific passage, it does not require us to go far in Luke's narrative to be reminded of the nature of a disciple's relationship to Jesus. In Luke 5:10, Peter, James, and John went on a fishing excursion with Jesus and hauled in a miraculous catch of fish. In brokenness Peter falls on his knees before the Lord and begs him to leave. Jesus responds with this statement, "Do not be afraid, from now on you will catch men." From this we find that a disciple's relationship and purpose are defined by Jesus. Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 5:15, Jesus died for all, "that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised." For the disciple, we seek what our master would have us do. We follow where he leads, we listen to what he says, and live no longer for our own self-interests, but pour ourselves out in service to others for the sake of Jesus. There may be many from the multitudes that never shift their focus from a selfish pursuit of Jesus and would eventually fade

away. Yet, the progression of one's relationship to Jesus must move from selfish pursuit to connecting to Jesus on the basis of his call and his terms.

### JESUS GIVES HIMSELF FREELY

*All the crowd sought to touch him* - In spite of the frenzy that surrounded Jesus as the throng of people were pressing against him, he willingly allowed himself to be approached in this manner. He did not run away nor have his disciples keep the crowds at bay. The sense we get from this passage is one of complete and utter pandemonium as each person with an illness or demon sought to fight their way to touch the Lord. There appears to be no limit to his patience in this matter and it seems that he desired every single person that was able to come before him to be healed of their infirmities.

*For power came out from him and healed them all* - It seems that in seeing Jesus reach out his hand to heal others the multitude develop a superstitious notion that in the action of touching Jesus they would be healed.<sup>2</sup> Again we must be reminded that Jesus gave up the independent use of his attributes. After his temptation, Luke 4:14 says "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee." Jesus ability to heal was through the power of God the Spirit. So as each person touched Jesus to be healed, the Spirit enabled that request to be granted and power came from Jesus to heal this great multitude of people. We find a similar incident in Luke 8:43-48 when a woman who was subject to bleeding for twelve years touched Jesus and was made well. Again we see the grace of God extended to those who approached Jesus to heal from an improper motive or an incorrect understanding.

### APPLICATION

We see the heart of God through the actions of Jesus as demonstrated by his genuine desire to alleviate the suffering of the multitudes. While they sought him from an incorrect understanding, this healing power was not restricted. However, in identifying ourselves as his followers we are expected to allow Christ to define our relationship to him and live in a manner that is worthy of our God and King,

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1 - M. G. Easton, Easton's Bible Dictionary (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996).

2 - I. Howard Marshall, The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978). 243.