



# CAPITOL COMMISSION

## A Faithless & Twisted Generation (Luke 9:37-50)

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Coming down the mountain Peter James, and John descend back into a broken world with Jesus. Nothing much had changed from a worldly perspective; no new tabernacle had been established in which the people might access the glory of Jesus, as proposed by Peter. In truth, everything has changed because the path to glory, previously announced by Jesus, had just been confirmed by this heavenly encounter. And this path requires from Jesus a journey to Jerusalem, and ultimately the cross. At this point the disciples are blind to the truth of Jesus' ministry because they are unable to see past their own preconceptions of the Messiah. The disciples had witnessed the all surpassing glory of God emanating from Jesus. They had heard the conversation between Moses, Elijah and their master, as they spoke about Jesus' exodus to Jerusalem; the center of the Jewish religious system. And they also heard the voice of God thunder through the cloud that overshadowed them, thus validating the sonship of Jesus as well as the importance of listening to him. Even though they had visibly witnessed his glory and heard this truth confirmed by the heavenly voice, the disciples still did not understand the identity of Jesus, nor accept his purpose. Jesus was the Christ, the King, the one ordained to usher in the reign of God - which is help for the poor, sick, and demon-possessed. His ministry declared that the long anticipated kingdom of God was now within their grasp, because as declared by Almighty God, the Christ was also his son. But as we will learn, the son's purpose was unwelcome news to his closest followers.

Before we plunge into Jesus' long journey to Jerusalem and the cross, we are left with an interlude that reveals in great detail the failure of Jesus' chosen apostles. This portion of Luke's account is a reminder of the disciple's inability to grasp the wisdom and power of God, Christ crucified, as attested by Paul in his letters. As we often see, the disciples move through moments of great service and insight, but then sink to the depths. They find themselves charged by Jesus as members of this "faithless and twisted generation" because of their inability to cleanse a boy possessed by an evil spirit. Luke's account shows this assessment is not only true for the nine disciples who were left to minister while the three others were on the mountain; but even these who had witnessed unspeakable things were guilty of this charge as reflected by their actions. These are strong and disturbing words spoken by the Lord to his disciples. This should forewarn all who seek to follow Jesus; if those who had first-hand contact with the Lord were unable to grasp his purpose and sought to co-op his power for their own misguided intentions, future generations must navigate these waters carefully. Jesus' ministry to the broken and hurting does not take place on the mountaintop, but instead it requires those who follow Jesus to descend down into the valley with him to the place where the crowds can seek his attention. In this gathering of people who meet Jesus after he descended from the mountain are the nine disciples who sought to minister in their master's absence. It was this group of disciples who were unable to cast out a demon from a boy, the only son of a desperate father who then sought out Jesus for help.

While our attention may be drawn to the boy's condition and the specifics of these epileptic seizures in connection to being possessed by an evil spirit. These things are stated as detailed observations to communicate the pathos of this father's anguish. However, what jumps out from the words of this narrative is Jesus' level of frustration in his assessment of this situation and the charge leveled at the audience, specifically toward his chosen apostles. As time draws to a close, Jesus laments over the spiritual condition of the disciples. After all they had heard and seen those who were to be entrusted with carrying on Jesus' work were still a part of this faithless and twisted generation. The disciples had not broken free from the world's corruption in how they understood Jesus and his ministry. The accounts that immediately follow this passage provide a tangible witness of the realities of this troubling condition that plagued the apostles. Those closest to Jesus were content in their confusion, consumed in their own greatness, protective of their position, and desirous to bring judgment upon any opposition. This should serve as a warning for each of us inundated by the same self-righteousness and unwillingness to extend the forbearance the Lord lavishes upon all who seek him.

*Luke 9:37-50 - (37) On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. (38) And behold, a man from the crowd cried out, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. (39) And behold, a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly cries out. It convulses him so that he foams at the mouth, and shatters him, and will hardly leave him. (40) And I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not." (41) Jesus answered, "O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here." (42) While he was coming, the demon threw him to the ground and convulsed him. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. (43) And 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." (45) But 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. (46) An argument arose among them as to which of them was the greatest. (47) But Jesus, knowing the reasoning of their hearts, took a child and put him by his side (48) and 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." (49) John answered, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he does not follow with us." (50) But Jesus said to him, "Do not stop him, for the one who is not against you is for you."*

### CONTENT IN THEIR CONFUSION

### BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS: TUESDAYS AT 8:00AM, ROOM 100 RYAN BUILDING

# *Pennsylvania*

## **A Faithless & Twisted Generation (Luke 9:37-50)**

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*They did not understand this saying...And they were afraid to ask him* - In contrast to the crowds who marveled at his words, Jesus shares something more pressing that the apostles must grasp. It is not accidental that the two perspectives concerning his exalted status and impending rejection are set beside one another. This contrast speaks to the importance of embracing the one over the other. Jesus' words of doom are spoken to his disciples in the same moment that others are marveling at his wonders. The disciples are being pressed to embrace the cost of discipleship over the glory that may, on occasion, be produced through serving the Lord in ministry to others. This is the movement that Jesus makes from king to cross in which Jesus embraces the work of the cross above his identity and position as the son of Almighty God. This is of vital importance for all who seek after Jesus to grasp if they desire to move past an immature and corrupt faith. Even though this is the second time Jesus makes this announcement the disciples are no closer to grasping this truth, and the time is running short. While this failure to comprehend Jesus' words may serve a divine purpose, it is doubtful that this lack of insight can be attributed to any divine intent. The disciples' inability to comprehend is grounded in their failure to fully embrace the new view of the world, one in which the conventional perspectives of honor and shame, glory and suffering are turned upside-down as it relates to God's purposes. It is because they have not adopted Jesus' view of the world that the disciples remain unable to grasp his purpose; and therefore unable to understand the nature of their own discipleship. At this point the apostles are content to exist in confusion concerning Jesus. By remaining silent, the disciples' fear and desire for self-preservation is exposed. They likely held back their questions out of fear that Jesus might expose areas in their own hearts in which they have no desire to actually change.

### **CONSUMED BY THEIR OWN GREATNESS**

*An argument arose among them as to which of them was the greatest* - The crippling effect of this fear produced an antithetical view of Jesus' purpose and repositioned the disciples. They were no longer helpers, instead they were opponents. This adversarial role was enhanced not only because an argument arose among the apostles, but Jesus' insight into their inner thoughts and the language they employed had been associated with Jesus' opponents. Even though this may have been a common language in any Greco-Roman gathering in antiquity, Jesus's messages always were oriented against such rhetorical tools that brought about power and authority. As Jesus reveals their inner thoughts, he also displays their abject failure to abide by the foundational aspects of his teachings. Again the charge he gave to the nine apostles who had been unable to heal the demon-possessed man were equally true for all twelve. They had shown themselves, by their actions, to be part of this faithless and twisted generation. This path of faithlessness began because they were unwilling to believe the truth that

Jesus stated regarding his purpose in Luke 9:22, "The Son of Man must suffer many things, be rejected, killed, and on the third day be raised." The disciples' path back toward partnership with Jesus began by believing this truth, then walking by faith on the basis of this belief. In spite of their faithlessness, Jesus was faithful, and patiently provides an object lesson for them by placing a child in a position of honor at his side. "To welcome" a person would be to extend them the honor of hospitality, but this only occurred with social equals and those whose honor was above their own. The disciples, in their mind, were honorable because they were welcomed by Jesus into his inner circle. But if the Lord welcomes all, then all are equally great, valuable, and important.

### **PROTECTIVE OF THEIR POSITION**

*We saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him* - Here we find John, one of the inner three who had been with Jesus when his appearance had been altered on the mountain. Surely one exposed to special revelation of this overwhelming magnitude would be able to comprehend the breadth of Jesus' instruction on his purpose and its implication on their discipleship. John's words of concern in regards to Jesus' instruction not only contradict his message, but it appears as if they are spoken as a response to Jesus' teachings. It is as if John was seeking to point out the repercussions of denying conventional levels of status when all are "welcomed" regardless of position. John levels a serious concern with this free-wheeling, accept all ministry approach. When these social norms are removed, then you have people running around performing ministry responsibilities without any control. The thing of real concern in John's mind, was how this rebel had the audacity to continue on with no concern of the harm to their official ministry when he and the other authorized ministry workers went to correct this error. John had become so twisted in his thinking that he probably believed he was seeking to be loyal to Jesus did not see that his true concern was about his standing and position when others were found doing similar ministry work. The irony is that this unnamed minister had worked in Jesus' name and was successful in an area that the disciples have been found lacking. The disciples had received the secrets of the kingdom (Luke 8:10), and power and authority to drive out demons (Luke 9:1), yet they were unable to do either. In this section of Scripture the disciples' failure is most evident as Jesus' stinging words make clear the disciples' actions. The magnitude of the disciples' condition established the need for a long journey which begins in Luke 9:51, with a focus on developing faithful and perceptive disciples.