

Are You Angry When You Evangelise? (1)
Having a Christ-like Attitude
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Bible Text: Luke 9:51-56
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The ninth chapter of the gospel according to Luke. Taking a break from our studies in the book of Genesis I want us to look at this ninth chapter of the gospel according to Luke from verses 51 to verse 56.

I wonder how it is that we respond when the gospel is being preached or rather when seek to share the gospel with others. Maybe it is through the giving of someone a tract or maybe it is in personal conversation, maybe a member of our family, maybe a work colleague and we seek to share the gospel to them. We seek to point them to Jesus Christ and we have a care for their souls so we want to tell them how it is that a person can be saved.

How do we respond when they turn around and rebuff us and say, “I don’t want to know. You are a fool. You are foolish for believing these things. I don’t believe it. You are from the dark ages. You are believing in a fairy tale and leave me alone”? How do we respond when somebody acts like that to us?

Do we turn around and say in an aggressive way, “Well, if that is the case, you are going to burn in hell forever and God’s hand is against you and you are a wretched sinner and I hope God’s fire comes down from heaven and consumes you on the spot”?

You say, “Oh, no I wouldn’t do that because I am a Christian and I have Jesus in my heart and I am meant to love my enemies.”

Well, you may be surprised that the way that an awful lot of us do respond. When people rebuff us for the gospel and tell us they want nothing to do with it or some even start like that. They start in sharing the gospel in an aggressive angry way as if the person they are speaking to is their worst enemy and almost as if they hope that they do burn in hell and that they are lost for eternity. That is not uncommon in evangelical circles.

Well, you may be surprised that that spirit was found even within the disciples. They had that type of spirit. The scene that is set before us, of course, is that Christ was on a journey. He was to travel to Jerusalem. Of course, that was not uncommon. If you are familiar with the New Testament you will know that people regularly traveled up to Jerusalem. People did it especially for the annual feasts that they would travel to Jerusalem from wherever they lived.

A short cut would be to go through Samaria where the Samaritans were. But many of the Jews—in order to avoid the Samaritans, because the Samaritans were unclean people in their eyes—they would go the long way around to Jerusalem. But we find not so with Christ as is in the case in John chapter four. Christ passes through Samaria, but he has his face, we are told, set to Jerusalem.¹

That is not in the same fashion as if we were traveling somewhere and we say, “I can’t wait to get there. I am really excited to get there,” and we can’t think of anything else apart from where we are going. When we find that Christ is setting his face towards Jerusalem it’s not just in the sense that he can’t wait to get to Jerusalem because it is such a nice place.

When we find here that Christ’s face is set towards Jerusalem it is a reference and an indication that Christ is to suffer and to die for the sins of man.

But we find that there are those who were sent before him, weren’t there? There were messengers that were sent before his face and they entered into a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him.²

How did the Samaritans respond to this visitation? When people, of course, would travel in those days, particularly when they were going up to the feasts, various people would give them hospitality. Various people would put them up for the night. I suppose today you would just stop in the motorway and get a bed and breakfast or something or we would find somewhere in which to lodge. Well, we may be not as hospitable as they were in biblical times, but people would put other people up.

With a thought of John’s message, meaning, when he says that those who preach a contrary gospel, a false gospel, we are not to invite them into our homes.³

It is not saying, of course, that should a Jehovah’s Witness or a Mormon or a Muslim or someone knock on your door that you are not to invite them in. It would be different, wouldn’t it, if you were to have a knock at your door and there were to be two smartly dressed Mormons and say, “Excuse me, sir. We have come from Utah and we are here six months. We were wondering if you would give us a bed and you would put us up and you would feed us so we can go on our door knocking and spread our message?”

We would have to say, “Well, I am very sorry. I can’t do that because I am a Christian and I don’t want to be a participator in the spreading of your false gospel.”

But it is not saying that we cannot invite people in who are spreading even a false gospel. I have done that numerous time and when they have knocked on my door, invited them

¹ See Luke 9:51

² See Luke 9:52

³ See 2 John 1:10

in. I have sat them down. And I gave them a cup of tea and I have opened a Bible and sought to show them the error of their ways.

Well these Samaritans wouldn't even given hospitality to those who were sent ahead to make ready for Christ, they wouldn't even give hospitality. We are told, "And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem."⁴

Well, what was the response of his disciples to this, to the rejection of the gospel, you could say, to the rejection of the Messiah?

Well, James and John they come, of course, and they are a little bit fired up, aren't they? And they say, "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?"⁵

That was their reaction. "Lord, burn them on the spot because of what they have done."

Or blast out the whole village because of a few people who refuse to give us hospitality.

You say, "That's not a very Christian response."

No, but it is very common today even in evangelical circles, to shout and to yell and to scream at people. "Well, if you don't listen to me, then you are going to burn in hell."

Now that may be true. Well, that is true, isn't it? The soul that dies outside of Jesus Christ goes to a lost eternity. But we must not do it in the spirit that these two men have done it.

We fall into the error of James and John. No wonder Christ called them, didn't he, sons of thunder.⁶

Well, Christ's response was not yes, "You just watch what I am going to do. I am going to consume them on the spot because of their rejection of me."

No. Christ rebukes them. He tells them, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of."⁷

He is saying, in fact, "That is not my mission. That is not why I have come into the world. I have not come to destroy men's lives," he said, "But I have come to save them. That is my mission. That is why I have come into the world."

In Luke 19:10 he says, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."⁸

⁴ Luke 9:53

⁵ Luke 9:54

⁶ See Mark 3:17

⁷ Luke 9:55

⁸ Luke 19:10

That is why he has come.

They just wanted him to come and to consume them in fire and to blast them out because they rejected the gospel.

There are four things that I want to note this morning all beginning with the letter R. So it shouldn't be too hard to remember.

Firstly, the REQUEST OF THE LORD, the request of the Lord.

We read, "And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him."⁹

Christ is sending out others before him and you are familiar with the gospels and you are familiar with the Old Testament you will know, of course, that John the Baptist was sent before, wasn't he? He was the forerunner of Christ. He was to prepare the way for Christ to come. And when Christ came into the world he didn't come in a vacuum. He didn't come like a meteor out of nowhere, all of the sudden in the pages of human history appears this man Jesus.

No. There were lots of warnings. There were lots of prophecies that foretold that the Son of Man, the Son of God would come into the world.

We know, don't we, there were shepherds watching their flocks? You know there were wise men who visited. Why? Because Christ had sent prophets before him to prepare the way. He had sent John the Baptist as the forerunner to prepare the way. And he sends others into the world.

You know, sometimes people say, "Well, I am not listening to you. But I would listen if God comes and sits at the end of my bed and says to me, 'You know, these things are true.'" And he says, "Then I will believe."

But, you know, they won't believe. For Christ said, "Even though one rose from the dead, if they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither would they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."¹⁰

So when people say, "I'll believe if I see a miracle or I see these things," Christ says, "No, you will not."

If you do not believe the plain preaching of the Word of God, if you do not believe the simple communication that God has given in his Word, a gospel tract, a leaflet, witnessing from someone who tells you from the Bible these things are true, so you don't

⁹ Luke 9:52

¹⁰ See Luke 16:31

believe that you will not be persuaded even though one rose from the dead said Christ in Luke chapter 16.

You see the problem is with man's heart, isn't it? It is a heart of unbelief.

But God has sent messengers before him and they have rejected him. And we must never get all upset and alarmed and like James and John expecting a big fire down from heaven. Just as well we don't have that power, isn't it?

We mustn't then get angry with the person because they have rejected Christ. They have rejected the message. We are to know, of course, Christ said, "If they have hated me, if they have rejected me, then you also will receive that."¹¹ So we shouldn't be surprised when people reject the gospel. They rebuff us for following Christ. They call us fools. We mustn't hit back and say, "Well, then you are a stupid fool, as well, aren't you? You are a bigger fool than I am because you don't believe. If you don't believe you are going to burn in hell."

There is a right way of saying things and there is a wrong way of saying things. So we have to be carriers of this message that God has placed within our hands and go forth bearing that precious seed.

But you will find, of course, that there was a request made to receive hospitality? We have already mentioned the pilgrims would travel from place to place and, of course, well, we say, "Why didn't they give them hospitality? Were they just mean people? Are the Samaritans just tight people? Do they just keep things to themselves? Are they just a selfish bunch of people?"

Not really, probably no more selfish than anybody else. They just didn't like the Jewish race. And they didn't like them.

See, the Jews and the Samaritans never mixed. And, of course, sure know that the Samaritans... that of course are sort of half breeds, weren't they, between Jew and Gentile. There in the Old Testament as they were overrun by their enemies, as they were taken, then, into captivity, of course. The whole system... the tribes, many of them disappeared, didn't they? And they became intermingled and became part Jew, part Gentile, part something else. And they would have had a mixture, of course, of religion. A bit of Judaism, a bit of paganism.

But the real Jews are the thoroughbreds. They didn't want anything to do with these half wits, these Samaritans. And they say, "Well, we don't mix with them." And that you already said sometimes the Jews would take a long way around to get to Jerusalem rather than cut through Samaria or a Samaritan village.

Take, for example, John chapter four and verse nine. "Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of

¹¹ See John 15:18

Samaria?”¹² She is surprised, isn't she? She is surprised at these things. She is surprised that Christ being a Jew would speak to her. “For the Jews,” she says, “have no dealings with the Samaritans”.¹³ They never mixed. There was racial divide. Sort of apartheid as it were. We don't mix. We don't associate. We don't have company with them.

But not only that you, you also find that, of course, they worshipped differently, didn't they?

Verse 20 of John chapter four. “Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.”¹⁴

Well, of course, Jesus said to her, you know, “Whether in Mount Gerazim or wherever it was that they worshipped, or in Jerusalem, “Christ says, “God is now seeking those to worship him who will worship him in Spirit and in truth.”¹⁵

Many people, of course, go on pilgrimages. I am not saying there is anything wrong in that as such. And they go to places, but there isn't anything more spiritual in one place than another.

We can't say one place is more holy than another. Although having said that we would say, of course, that where God's people meet, where they fellowship, where they pray, where God comes down and blesses them, there is something unique in a sense, isn't there about that place. There's nothing special about the walls or other things - that we don't have crucifixes. We don't have images. We don't have stained glass windows. We don't have those things. Why? Because we worship God in Spirit and in truth. The worship of God and the Reformers and the early Church, they worshipped, didn't they in sort of not elaborate places, not ornamental buildings. They were very simple. They were very basic, just praying places. But the thing is that God is present with his people. That is the main thing.

So the place where we worship God is not just in one hill or another, but it is that God is present with us.

But you will notice one thing here that after they called fire to come down from heaven which, of course, Christ rebuked them for; Christ rebuked them for these things. But you will also find that they didn't stay in that village and almost bash the doors down because they weren't listening.

What do we find they did? You will find in verse 56, “For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.”¹⁶ They moved on to the next village. They didn't, in a sense, force them to believe.

¹² John 4:9

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ John 4:20

¹⁵ See John 4:21-24

¹⁶ Luke 9:56

Now if you were in a Muslim country you can imagine it, in some Muslim countries, not all. Some are quite secular. Or if we were to transport yourself back a few thousand years, but not quite so many thousands, 600 years after Christ and you will find as the armies went out from place to place and sometimes even those who professed themselves to be Christian, sometimes people say, "But what of the Crusades?"

The Crusades were nothing to do with God's people. The Crusades were nothing to do with Christianity. If you obey the gospel it is the last thing you will do. But you can imagine, can't you, people going from a village and the whole village rebuffs your religion. What do you do? Burn the village down.

You see, because they won't follow you, so you just kill everybody.

No, no. Christ says, "You move on to the next village."

You don't bring fire down from heaven. You don't consume them. You move on. You move on. They've heard the gospel. You presented it in a Christ like manner. They rejected it. We move on to the next one.

Now there is a time, I am sure for, where we say, "Well, I have spoken to someone so many times," and now there may be a time where you just have to keep quiet. And you have to move on to the next.

"Well, we have done our work here and they have been rejected."

"Well," Christ says, "Then move on to the next village and preach there."

But you don't destroy the village. You don't call fire down from heaven that God would consume them in judgment.

And where there may be a time when we say, "Well, I shared the gospel enough," well, we don't give up. We mustn't give up. We must go on praying and pray that opportunities may come then in the future for the presenting of the gospel.

You see, what were they doing by moving on to the next village? Well, they were avoiding confrontation, weren't they? They were avoiding confrontation.

What would you think if they just said, "What we are going to do is, we are going to set up a synagogue here. We are going to set up our own village and we ain't moving and you are going to listen."

No, no. They avoided confrontation. They moved on. And there are times when people don't listen. And it gets an ugly scene. There is a place and a time, isn't there, for wiping the dust off our feet and saying, "Well, we just ought to move on and avoid the confrontation."

There were many times, weren't there, in Christ's ministry, when he avoided a confrontation. There were times when they even hung the apostle Paul over the wall in a basket in a rather undignified way and he escaped. There does come a time where we think that we need to move on to the next place.

We need to seek, don't we, listening ears, and not forcing our point.

The second point I want to note is the REJECTION OF THE LORD. They rejected the Lord. We already said that Christ was setting his sights towards Jerusalem.

Now this marks, if you are interested in the technical things of studying the gospels, you would find that here marks a major turning point in the gospel of Luke. Right way through to chapter 19 and verse 27. It is a big turning point in the gospel of Luke because we find that Christ is setting himself toward Jerusalem. He has come. He has been brought into the world and in Luke 9:27 reminds us, "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me."¹⁷

But that is at the end, isn't it, of his ministry? Christ has come, he had set his sights towards Jerusalem. In other words, we have already said it is not because Jerusalem is a nice place to visit and he is excited about going there. But he sets his sights towards Jerusalem because there at Jerusalem is the place where Christ is going to give himself a ransom for sinners. He is there to give his life a ransom for sinners. That is the reason why he came.

Why haven't you come to destroy men's lives?

Well, he says, "I have not come to destroy men's lives, but rather I have come to save them."¹⁸

Well, how are you going to save them? Not by calling fire down from heaven to consume them on the spot, but rather he said he is going to save them by giving his life a ransom for sinners. Where is that going to happen? At the cross of Calvary where Christ was to be crucified. That is why Christ never consumed them on the spot. That is why he said the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but I have come to save them. I have not come to destroy the Samaritans and destroy their villages, rather I have come to save them. I have come to redeem them. I have come to ransom them. I have come to rescue them is what he is saying.

And nothing would distract Christ from that work.

Men had sought to distract him from the work. He saw the devil, didn't he? The devil sought to take away from the ministry of Christ. The devil sought to prevent Christ from going to the cross.

¹⁷ Luke 19:27

¹⁸ See Luke 9:56

Have you ever wondered what all the battles are about in the Old Testament? Have you ever wondered about these things? You know, some people pour scorn, don't they, upon the Old Testament especially. They say, "What type of a God do you worship?"

And they come along and they say, "Look at God, you know, the God of the Bible. He wipes out all the Amalekites. He kills all the people. He destroys all of his enemies."

Well, because - how do we answer that one? We say to those things. Everyone was wiped out. Well, we can say, "Look - initially, initially, the death penalty was for all sinners. Every sin deserved the death penalty. That's why we die."

God said to our first parents, "The day you eat, you shall surely die. You disobey me, death is the result."¹⁹

But, of course, you will notice that God was merciful from day one. The moment Adam sinned he died spiritually, he died in a qualitative sense, but he didn't die physically. He lived to 930 odd. God's mercy.

And as you go through the Old Testament you will find that originally every sin deserved the death penalty. Then it became only so for the more serious of sins required the death penalty. And God destroyed nations. He destroyed the enemies. Why? Because that is what we deserve. Many of them were exceedingly wicked and they were a danger to God's people. They would have influenced the people of God. They would have brought God's judgment upon them as they did many times. And if I listen to you, there would have been no Israel left and there would have been no Savior born in the world and there would be no salvation for any of us.

So God preserved his people Israel. He would bring forth a Messiah, born of a woman, born under the law to redeem them that were under the law,²⁰ says the apostle Paul. And nothing could distract him.

We think of Herod, don't we? Killing all the children of two years and under. Why? The devil was behind that to wipe out the Savior. If you can kill the child he has prevented the cross.

All of the New Testament is about this. It is not about, sometimes people speak about... and I know people speak about that and liberals speak about it. They speak about in the things like... you know, kingdom theology. They go on about these sort of things, the different terms that they mean. But some people mean about the kingdom, bringing in the kingdom on the earth. What they mean is just following Jesus, his moral example, following Jesus, his moral code. In other words, just be good to your neighbor. Give up things. Be good to your neighbor. You should be good to your neighbor.

¹⁹ See Genesis 2:17

²⁰ see Galatians 4:4-5

But that is not the gospel. That is not the gospel. The gospel is Christ dies for sinners. The gospel is Christ came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost. The gospel is Christ paying the penalty for our sins, a holy God pouring out his wrath upon his innocent Son. That is what the gospel is. The gospel is repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. Let nothing else come in the way of that because today things like the Emergent Church and old fashioned Liberalism and all these things will come in to take away the real gospel of Christ. They say that to be a Christian is simply is to be a good citizen. Christians should be a good citizen. That is not what makes a Christian.

A Christian is not someone who goes to church on Sunday, says a few hail Mary's or keeps the feasts or even reads and prays, or kiss the image. It is someone who has been born again by God's Holy Spirit who has repented of their sin, who has acknowledged themselves to be a sinner and has run to Jesus Christ and thrown themselves upon him and cried out for his mercy. And that is what is available to even the Samaritans.

But, you know, chiefly, Christ originally came to the Israelites.

And turn back to Matthew chapter ten, then you look at verse five. You find these words. Matthew 10 and there at verse five. "These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not."²¹

Now I don't know. Maybe the Samaritans in this village would have got wind of that and they would have thought, "Well, this is what you said to those disciples. Well, we are not going to give you hospitality."

They still could have got saved, by the way, even that.

But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.²²

And, of course, that is not saying that no Gentile could ever get saved before then because even in the Old Testament we find that even with Ruth, even with those that were outside of the nation of Israel, but they were brought in unto God's grace and into God's covenant.

But what we are saying here is, chiefly, that he would not go to all these other people, rather he would begin there at the house of Israel. And isn't there a principle there for us all? The principle is, of course, you begin at home.

When a person gets saved and is born again -"well, I am going to be a missionary to some such place and run off", as some of us have wanted to do. No, begin at home. Start with your family, not telling them that, "Look...." And pushing it down their throat. No.

²¹ Matthew 10:5

²² Matthew 10:6-7

And telling them, you know, in sort of a John and James fashion, you know, “I will call fire down from heaven and you will burn in hell.”

Rather, preach the salvation of God’s grace to them, that God has done something wonderful, that God has sent Christ into the world to die for sinners, that we may escape the wrath to come.

Two preachers were in conversation years back and one said to the other, “What are you preaching on on the Lord’s Day?”

He says, “Well, I am going to preach on hell. I am going to preach on hell.”

And the other preacher said to him, “Well, brother, I hope you do it with tears. I hope you do it with tears.” Because hell is an awful place. It is a one way place.

And young people go there, not just older people, but boys as well who die outside of Christ will go to such a place.

So he says, “Preach it, with tears.”

But he comes to the house of Israel first, didn’t he, but it wasn’t to stay there. The gospel message wasn’t only to be for the house of Israel, but it was to be to the Samaritans as well, to their enemies. You notice one thing that brings enemies together is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Someone said to Ian Paisley there in Northern Ireland what he thought of the peace process; that is, when it all started. And he said, “Well, I’ll tell you what the real peace process is.” When he went to visit Crumlin Road prison which was, of course, where they housed the terrorists. Saw two men singing out of the same hymn sheet, one was a former Republican terrorist, the other a former loyalist terrorist singing from the same hymn sheet. Why? Because it was the gospel of Jesus Christ that brought those who were once enemies together, one in Jesus Christ and friends in him. That is what the gospel does, Jew or Samaritan, bring them together in Christ. Those who were once bitter enemies can become the best of friends when united in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Christ’s ministry wasn’t limited in scope; which is why Christ can say, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”²³ Every creature, preach the gospel to them from every nation under heaven, every tongue and tribe, people and nation. Leave none out. Preach the gospel to them all.

And we believe in that. The universal proclamation of God’s message of salvation and God’s saving grace. And that is what he has done and they didn’t quite like it, in a sense. They wanted fire come down from heaven. I don’t know whether they were just carrying a bit of bias that they simply didn’t like the Samaritans or they may have even been, of course, a mixture of righteous anger. And there is a difference, of course, between our

²³ Mark 16:15

righteous anger and our unrighteous anger. Christ isn't rebuking his disciples—and we'll look at that this evening—he isn't rebuking his disciples and saying, “You must never be angry.”

The Bible says, “Be ye angry, and sin not.”²⁴

I know it says, “Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.”²⁵

There is a righteous anger that Christ overturned the tables. But we see from Christ's rebuke, James and John didn't have a righteous anger. Their anger had turned and spilled over into that which was sinful.

So whenever we preach the gospel, share the gospel with others, it should be done out of compassion for their souls, not an overly judgmental attitude which we looked at this evening, but rather to be done in a way, as the preacher said to one, with a sense of tears. Why? Because we want their souls to be saved. We want them who are lost to be found. We want those who are under God's judgment to be released from that judgment and to become one in Jesus Christ.

Well, we will end on that note and we will look at the last two points, then, later on this evening. But let us bow for a word of prayer. Let us pray.

Father in heaven, we thank thee for thy grace and for thy mercy. We thank thee that thou art our all compassionate God. We bless thee that thy Son has come to seek and to save that which is lost. We pray that that may be so. We pray that thou would save us from having the same spirit even as James and John had fallen into. And we pray that thou wouldst forgive us when we have done that and we pray that thou would help us to have a compassion for souls that we would see them as men and women and boys and girls with eternal souls that will spend eternity in heaven or even in hell. For Jesus' sake we pray. Amen.

²⁴ Ephesians 4:26

²⁵ Ibid.