

# Luke 9:7-9

*"Foolish Faith"*

*December 29, 2024*

## 1. Intro

- a. If you were here with us last week for our Christmas service, you'll remember that in our previous passage, Luke 9:1-6, we saw Jesus send out the twelve apostles on their very first mission
  - i. Jesus gave the twelve HIS power
  - ii. He gave the twelve HIS authority
    1. And in his power and authority, these twelve young men...
      - a. An odd group of fishermen, a tax collector, a zealot, and a bunch of unknowns
      - b. These twelve young men went out, preaching the gospel and healing EVERYWHERE!
    2. The fact that they were performing these miracles were indeed incredible
      - a. But we have to remember the consistent message of the Scriptures
        - i. Yes, these early disciples performed GREAT signs and wonders in the name of Jesus
          1. But the signs and wonders WERE NOT the point
          2. Throughout the Gospels, and into the book of Acts, all of these signs and wonders were meant for one thing and one thing only...
            - a. To validate THE MESSAGE
        - ii. The MESSAGE is always the point – if we miss that, then we run the risk of losing sight of why WE are here as Christians
          1. The signs and wonders performed by the early Christians have certainly diminished... and that is a conversation we will have on another day
            - a. But here, now, today... our MESSAGE has not changed
          2. Nearly two thousand years after Christ, we have been given the task to proclaim the very same message that the twelve were tasked with
            - a. To proclaim the Kingdom of God!
  3. As we saw last week, this Kingdom was not a new idea that God came up with when everything else fall apart
    - a. This Kingdom began with Adam and Eve in the Garden
      - i. It can be traced through the covenants God made with Noah, and then with Abraham, and then with the nation of Israel
      - ii. It began to come into focus through King David and the covenant God made with him
        1. And it all came to fruition with the coming of God's only begotten Son
          - a. Jesus, the Son of David
          - b. Jesus, the Lion of the tribe of Judah
          - c. Jesus, the Son of Man... the Son of God!
    - b. This Jesus came to this earth as a little baby boy
      - i. And as he grew into a man, he began proclaiming this one central message...

1. "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!"
4. And by this time in Luke's Gospel, this message of the Kingdom was already having a noticeable impact
  - a. Jesus has taken this message throughout Galilee
  - b. He has taken the message across the Sea of Galilee to the shores of the Decapolis
  - c. He's even taken this message into Jerusalem, and to the very Temple of God
    - i. Jesus has certainly been stirring things up, as he's brought word of the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven to earth
- b. But now, this Gospel and its signs and wonders were not just being spread by one man
  - i. NOW, this message of the Gospel was being spread by THIRTEEN men... by Jesus AND the twelve!
    1. Thirteen men are now going throughout the villages of Judea, casting out demons
    2. Thirteen men are now going throughout all the towns, healing people from diseases
    3. Thirteen men are now traveling the countryside, proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom of God
      - a. And they were all led by ONE man, this man Jesus of Nazareth, who was drawing massive crowds, defying the religious leaders, and even claiming to be the Son of God
        - i. And so, this brings us to our brief passage for this morning...

## 2. Luke 9:7-9

- a. *<sup>7</sup>Now Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was happening, and he was perplexed, because it was said by some that John had been raised from the dead, <sup>8</sup>by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the prophets of old had risen. <sup>9</sup>Herod said, "John I beheaded, but who is this about whom I hear such things?" And he sought to see him.*
  - i. We talked a while back about Herod the Tetrarch, when we looked at Luke 7, verses 18-35
    1. It's easy to get confused about Herod, especially around the Christmas season
      - a. In the Christmas story that we usually hear around this time of the year, the story culminates as Jesus is born in the manger...
        - i. The wise men come to visit him and bring him their gifts
        - ii. And then Joseph and Mary and Jesus flee to Egypt, as evil King Herod orders the slaughter of all the baby boys in Bethlehem, seeking to rid himself of the threat of some prophesied "king"
    2. However, THIS Herod that we encounter here in Luke 9 IS NOT that King Herod, but rather, this is King Herod's son, Herod Antipas
      - a. After King Herod's death, Rome divided up the regions surrounding Jerusalem into four distinct regions
        - i. And instead of a king ruling over these regions, Rome appointed four separate "Tetrarchs" to rule individually
          - a. One of these Tetrarchs was Herod Antipas, who ruled over the regions of Galilee and Perea
    3. It was THIS Herod who ended up marrying his brother's wife
      - a. And therefore, it was THIS Herod who was rebuked by John the Baptist
        - i. John the Baptist had of course been sent to prepare the way for the coming Messiah
          1. Like Jesus after him, John would proclaim the simple and straightforward message, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!"

- a. And John had no problem whatsoever in taking this message of repentance to the governing authorities
    - b. And so, when John heard about Herod's affair with his brother's wife, John went to Herod, and he called him to repent
      - i. In the Gospel of Mark, we find out that Herod Antipas actually feared John, and even tried to keep him safe
        - 1. But his wife, Herodias, didn't feel the same way
          - a. She didn't appreciate that fact that she was being portrayed as an adulteress who was breaking the laws of God in heaven
            - i. So she forced her husband to have John bound in prison
            - ii. And she would ultimately be the one who would demand his head
        - ii. Sadly, Herod capitulates to his wife, and the head of John the Baptist was delivered up to her on a platter
4. You can only imagine... if Herod Antipas feared John the Baptist while he was still alive, how much more afraid would he have been as people came to him with reports of Jesus, saying,
  - a. "This man is John, raised from the dead!"
    - i. Others came saying that this was the return of the great prophet Elijah
    - ii. Others said that this Jesus was some other prophet of old, risen again as a prophet for these days
- b. And, at the heart of this passage is the fact that Herod, the mighty tetrarch of Judea, son of the great King Herod who had restored the Temple in Jerusalem...
  - i. This Herod, when he heard about all that was happening... Luke tells us that Herod... was PERPLEXED
    - 1. According to Strong's Concordance, this word for perplexed "conveys a sense of being THOROUGHLY at a loss"
      - a. It implies a deep level of confusion or uncertainty, where one is unable to find a clear path or solution
- c. What we need to understand is that this word would have been a familiar word to those reading Luke's Gospel
  - i. Think about the historical context of the days in which Christ and John the Baptist and Herod Antipas lived
    - 1. Even though the Roman Empire was the clear and unopposed regime of those days, the Roman Empire had been built largely upon the Greek Culture
      - a. This was one of the things that made Rome so strong
        - i. Typically, when a nation would seek to overtake and rule another nation, they would enter into that lesser nation, and get rid of that nation's culture
          - 1. They would destroy the temples of their gods or goddesses
          - 2. They would execute or deport the men of learning
          - 3. They would basically do all that they could to eradicate the culture of the lesser nation
      - ii. But Rome was different
        - 1. Instead of seeking to destroy the cultures of these lesser nations, they sought to ABSORB these cultures into their own



2. This Socratic Method of asking question after question after question, in an effort to get to the root of all of these ideas and concepts, became the bedrock of Greek wisdom
  - a. It would continue through his student Plato, who would say such things as, "Ignorance is the root and stem of all evil."
    - i. It would then continue on through Plato's student, Aristotle, who would become a tutor of Alexander the Great himself
      1. Aristotle would write on all sorts of different subjects, including logic, philosophy, politics, physics, and even poetry and theater
      2. Aristotle would take this search for wisdom, and he would also apply it to himself, as he said,
        - a. "The most important relationship we can all have is the one you have with yourself, the most important journey you can take is one of self-discovery. To know yourself, you must spend time with yourself, you must not be afraid to be alone. Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom."
    3. It's interesting that this quote from one of history's greatest thinkers stands in direct opposition to the wisdom given from God centuries before
      - a. Aristotle said that "Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom."
      - b. But Proverbs 9:10 says, "*The FEAR OF THE LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.*"
        - i. This is an opposition that we will expand upon in just a few moments
- b. From Socrates, to Plato, to Aristotle, the Greeks prided themselves on their pursuit of wisdom
  - i. They weren't content to just take things at face value, but instead they questioned EVERYTHING
    1. Ignorance was the greatest of all evils
    2. The inner knowledge of yourself was the greatest of all good
  - ii. Well, again, when the Romans came along, they did not do away with this pursuit of wisdom
    1. Instead, they absorbed it into their own culture
      - a. One of the great ROMAN philosophers would be the man known as Seneca the Younger, who lived in Rome during the days of Christ
        - i. He would eventually go on to become a tutor to Emperor Nero, the same Emperor Nero who would have both Peter and Paul executed for their faith
          1. Perhaps we can see the roots of Nero's evil thinking in Seneca's quote,
            - a. "Religion is regarded by the common people as true, by the wise as false, and by rulers as useful"
          2. For Emperor Nero, Christianity had outlasted its usefulness as it was rapidly expanding throughout his empire
            - a. And so he sought to eradicate it through violent persecution

- c. This was the wisdom that flowed throughout the Roman Empire in the days of Jesus and Herod Antipas
    - i. Wisdom is sought after by asking questions
    - ii. Wisdom can be found by digging deep into any issue
    - iii. Wisdom can be found, within one's self
      - 1. Herod Antipas, an educated ruler amongst the elite in the Roman Empire, would have been brought up under this kind of instruction
        - a. And yet here, in this man Jesus of Nazareth, was a mystery
          - i. Was this John the Baptist brought back to life?
            - 1. Surely not! For I saw his head upon the platter I gave to Herodias!
          - ii. Was this Elijah returned from the dead?
            - 1. Surely not! For Elijah had long been buried in the grave
      - 2. Herod had been taught that, through careful questioning and proper philosophical inquiry, the truth of any matter could be discovered
        - a. But when confronted with Jesus, Herod was... perplexed
          - i. How could this carpenter's son from the nowhere town of Nazareth be drawing so many to himself?
          - ii. How could this man who came from the backwoods of obscurity be performing such great signs and wonders, and standing against the powerful religious leaders of Judea?
          - iii. How could this man, who had made the insane claim that he was the son of God Himself, now have followers who were also beginning to spread this message of the Kingdom of God?
      - 3. In all of Herod's wisdom, when confronted with the man Jesus, he was left with no answers at all
4. This confusion would not end with Herod Antipas would it?
  - a. The Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate, would also strive to figure out who this man Jesus was
    - i. In Luke 23, we'll see Pilate questioning Jesus, trying to figure out why the Council of Jewish Elders hated him so much
      - 1. Pilate is unable to figure it out, so he actually sends Jesus to Herod Antipas to let Herod deal with him
        - a. Luke tells us that Herod asks Jesus question after question, and yet he still had no answers
          - i. And strangely enough, Luke also tells us that, in their ignorance of who Jesus was, Herod and Pilate would become good friends with each other
  - b. The Apostle Paul would experience this same kind of ignorance that was falsely cloaked in wisdom
    - i. In Acts 24, as Paul is nearing his imprisonment in Rome, he is taken to Caesarea, where he is put on trial before Governor Felix
      - 1. Felix and his wife, Drusila, question Paul over all sorts of things, such as righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment
        - a. Again, this is the Greek way to wisdom, isn't it?
      - 2. But Felix could find no satisfactory answers, even though he kept Paul there for two years, often returning to him for more questions
        - a. Paul would eventually stand before yet another Herod, this time it would be Herod Agrippa, the son of Herod the Tetrarch
          - i. And in Acts 26, after Paul gives his defense, sharing his own personal testimony, and testifying before all that Jesus was the Messiah,

1. Herod the third, just like his father before him, and his grandfather before him,
    - a. Chose to reject this Gospel of the Kingdom
    - ii. In verse 28, King Agrippa says to Paul, "In a short time, would you persuade ME to be a Christian?"
  - b. This message that Paul was standing before them proclaiming, in chains, was a message of foolishness
    - i. Whoever this man Jesus was, he was just a man
      1. His dad was some no-account carpenter
      2. Even though he gained a lot of followers during his lifetime, they all fled when he was crucified
      3. This man Jesus, was dead
        - a. Just like every other false prophet before him
        - b. Just like every other instigator of rebellions
        - c. Just like every other insurrectionist
    - c. Rome was still the Empire in charge
      - i. Herod Agrippa was still the king of his own region within the Empire
        1. And people like this man Paul were all just a bunch of fools
    - d. And Paul would say to all the Herods out there in the world, "You are absolutely correct. We ARE a bunch of fools!"
5. Isn't this what we heard at the beginning of the service, as we read Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 1?
  - a. Let's go to this passage in our Bibles, and we'll look at it more in-depth, starting in verse 18...
    - i. 1 Corinthians 1:18-25
      1. *<sup>18</sup>For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. <sup>19</sup>For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." <sup>20</sup>Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? [Where is the wisdom of Socrates? Where is the discernment of Plato? Where is Aristotle? Where is Seneca?] Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? <sup>21</sup>For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. <sup>22</sup>For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, <sup>23</sup>but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, <sup>24</sup>but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. <sup>25</sup>For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.*
  - b. My friends, just think about the foolishness of this great story in which we put so much hope
    - i. We actually believe that there is a God in heaven who created ALL things...
      1. That there wasn't some random collision of molecules out there in the nothingness that eventually led to galaxies and the earth and humans and ants
        - a. We actually believe that there is ONE God who created ALL of it
        - b. And He not only created it, but He is sustaining it and upholding it, even as we sit here in these pews right now
          - i. This is folly to those who are perishing!
    - ii. We actually believe that God created man out of the dust, and then woman out of one of his ribs, and that He breathed life into both of them
      1. And that it was our very first father and mother, Adam and Eve, who chose to disobey God's law in the Garden, and as a result we ALL are wretched and depraved and enemies of God
        - a. This is foolishness to the wise men of our age!

- iii. We actually believe that God chose ONE nation for Himself, out of all the other nations in the entire world
  - 1. And to this one nation, the Israelites, according to Romans 4, was given the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises
    - a. This is not only folly to the world, it's just downright discriminatory, isn't it?
- iv. We actually believe that in this ONE nation, in one poor little backwoods town called Nazareth,
  - 1. That the Holy Spirit would overshadow a young virgin girl named Mary, and she would conceive within her womb the very Son of God
    - a. Isn't that crazy? We actually BELIEVE in the virgin birth of Christ!
      - i. If our folly wasn't too unbelievable by now, certainly THAT tips us over the edge, doesn't it?
        - 1. Well just hang on friends, we're not even to the peak of our foolishness yet, are we?
- v. For, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1, we actually point to the cross as the hope of our salvation
  - 1. Over the centuries, we've romanticized the cross and cleaned it up so it will be more to our liking
    - a. Today, we like to hang crosses in our living rooms, sometimes made out of rough pieces of wood, but sometimes made of elaborately wrought metals, even with gold or jewels all over it
    - b. But think about what the cross was...
      - i. The cross was the guillotine of that day
      - ii. The cross was the electric chair of those times
        - 1. It was the worst form of punishment and execution, reserved for the worst of criminals
          - a. And yet Paul would write in Galatians 6:14,
            - i. *<sup>14</sup>But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*
  - 2. The cross of Jesus is the hope of our salvation
  - 3. The word of the cross is the power of God for us who are being saved
    - a. For it is at the cross where Jesus took our sin upon his shoulders
    - b. It is at the cross where Jesus shed his own blood to purchase our forgiveness
    - c. It is at the cross where God made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that IN HIM WE might become the righteousness of God
      - i. We preach Christ crucified
        - 1. Our message is a stumbling block to Jews
        - 2. And it is folly to the Gentiles
          - a. But for all of us who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is both the power of God, AND the WISDOM of God
  - 4. We preach Christ crucified as the only hope that our sinful treason against God might be forgiven
    - a. And the philosophers call us fools
- vi. But we don't stop at Christ crucified... we ALSO preach Christ RESURRECTED!

1. This is what Felix and Festus and Herod Agrippa all got hung up on... Jesus DIED on that cross
    - a. The soldiers confirmed his death
      - i. He was placed in a tomb, where his body was guarded for two days
      - ii. But on the third day, his disciples supposedly came in the night and stole his body while the guards were asleep
        1. According to the wisdom of the world, dead men don't rise from the grave
    - b. But as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, Christ RESURRECTED is the message of FIRST IMPORTANCE for us
      - i. That he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures
      - ii. Then he appeared to Cephas, and then to the twelve
      - iii. Then he appeared to more than FIVE HUNDRED brothers at one time
      - iv. And lastly, he appeared to Paul, the least of the Apostles... one untimely born
  2. We don't just preach Christ crucified, we preach Christ RESURRECTED
    - a. For if Christ has not been raised from the dead, then as Paul says, we are of ALL people most to be pitied
      - i. This was a message of foolishness to King Agrippa
        1. And it is a message of foolishness to the world still today
- c. We could keep going and going, couldn't we?
- i. For do we not also proclaim that Christ ascended to the throne in Heaven, where he now rules over all things?
  - ii. Do we not also proclaim that God has sent His Holy Spirit to dwell within ALL who have surrendered their lives to Christ as King?
  - iii. Do we not also proclaim that Christ is going to return to this earth, and that he will judge the nations with justice and righteousness, and that all who are in his Kingdom will rule and reign with him for all eternity...
    1. While all of his enemies will forever endure the fires of hell, as a just condemnation for their sinful rebellion?
  - iv. And do we not also proclaim that this is ALL by God's grace?
    1. That none of us deserve God's love and mercy...
    2. That none of us could ever hope to earn His forgiveness...
    3. That none of us could ever do enough good works in this life to be saved from our sins...
      - a. That it is ALL by God's grace, and God's grace alone?
        - i. My friends, from start to finish, the message that we have been entrusted to proclaim to the world is a message of absolute foolishness
          1. And that is EXACTLY how God ordained it to be
- d. Look again at 1 Corinthians 1, and look at the conclusion that Paul comes to in verses 26-31...
- i. *<sup>26</sup>For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. <sup>27</sup>But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; <sup>28</sup>God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, <sup>29</sup>so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. <sup>30</sup>And BECAUSE OF HIM you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, <sup>31</sup>so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."*

1. Brothers and sisters in Christ, look around the room
    - a. We don't have any world-renowned philosophers sitting in our midst...
      - i. There's no Socrates or Plato or Seneca in this room
    - b. We don't have any presidents or governors or people with great political power
    - c. As far as I know, we don't have anyone here in this room today who were born into nobility
      - i. No kings or queens, no princes or princesses, right?
  2. No, we don't have any of those titles that the world pines after, do we?
    - a. We do have teachers...
    - b. We do have retired refinery workers...
    - c. We do have stay-at-home moms...
    - d. We do have general contractors... and students... and baristas... and future farmers
      - i. And the Scriptures are clear,
        1. God chose EACH OF YOU to shame the wise
        2. God chose EACH OF YOU to shame the strong and the powerful
        3. God chose what is low and despised in the world... you and me... in order that NO ONE might boast in his presence
  3. Look again at verse 30...
    - a. BECAUSE OF HIM... BECAUSE OF GOD... you are in Christ Jesus
      - i. HE is the wisdom from God
      - ii. HE is our righteousness and sanctification
      - iii. HE is our redemption
        1. And therefore, if you are going to boast about ANYTHING in this life, boast in the Lord!
- e. My friends, this is so important for us to realize
- i. Just as it was centuries ago, the message of the virgin birth, the message of Christ crucified, the message of Christ RESURRECTED
    1. In fact, the entire message of the Scriptures... according to the wisdom of the world, it is ALL folly
      - a. And yet this is the message we have been entrusted with
      - b. It is the ONLY message we have been entrusted with
        - i. We live in a day and age when it is so tempting to change this message...
          1. To tweak it just a little here, just a little there
            - a. If we just make the message a little more palatable to the lost, then maybe more of them will come to our church
            - b. If we just remove the Christian lingo from our messages and from our websites, it'll help make them more comfortable here
            - c. If we would just stop talking about sin and repentance and the need for forgiveness, and the fact that only the blood of Jesus can atone for our sins
          - ii. If we could just change the message a little, then maybe people will like us more
    2. But this simply is not what the Bible teaches us, is it?

- ii. Christ and his message of the Kingdom were folly to Herod the tetrarch
  - 1. Despite all of his supposed wisdom, Herod was still left perplexed when it came to Jesus and who he was
    - a. In fact, we'll see in Luke 13 that Herod will eventually decide that he wants to kill Jesus
      - i. But Jesus' only reply was, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course.'"
        - 1. Jesus had no time for Herod's wisdom
          - a. He had a message to proclaim
          - b. He had a mission to accomplish
            - i. And NO ONE would alter his course from that mission
- iii. Brothers and sisters in Christ, God saved YOU, because He wanted to accomplish HIS mission
  - 1. If we're willing to be honest with ourselves, that was pretty foolish on God's part, wasn't it?
    - a. And yet, the Scriptures are clear, God chose what is foolish to shame the wise
    - b. He chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong
      - i. And in the wisdom of God, it has pleased God through the FOLLY of what we preach to save those who believe
        - 1. May we stick to the folly of the Scriptures as we proclaim this Gospel of the Kingdom
        - 2. And may the Lord help us to flee from the wisdom of this world