

Luke 9:49-50

“The Church Universal”

March 9, 2025

1. Intro

- a. Last week we saw in verses 46-48 that the disciples were still struggling with what the Kingdom of God was going to look like
 - i. And more specifically, what would be THEIR role in the Kingdom?
 1. They hadn't yet realized that Jesus had come, not to institute an earthly kingdom, one where power and influence and affluence reigned supreme
 - a. But rather, Jesus had come to turn all of those things upside-down
 - i. HIS Kingdom would be inherited by the meek and the poor in spirit
 - ii. HIS Kingdom would be inherited by the peacemakers, and those who are pure in heart
 - iii. HIS Kingdom would be inherited, not by those who desired greatness, but by those who stooped low in humility
 1. “Do you want to be great in the Kingdom?” Jesus asked...
 - a. Then become a servant
 2. “Do you want to rule and reign by my side in the ETERNAL Kingdom?”
 - a. Then become like a little child
 - b. Pursue humility!
 - ii. What's fascinating is that Jesus' mom had already come to see the reality of this coming Kingdom, and she had sung about it thirty years earlier
 1. In Mary's great Magnificat, in Luke 1:46-56, Mary magnified the Lord for choosing her to bear the very Son of God
 - a. And as she magnified Him, she sang these words...
 - i. *⁴⁶My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; ⁴⁹for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. ⁵⁰And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. ⁵¹He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; ⁵²he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; ⁵³he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. ⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, ⁵⁵as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.*
 - b. Contrary to the disciples' expectations, Jesus had not come to make Israel great again
 - i. But instead, he had come to scatter the proud
 - ii. Instead, he had come to bring down the mighty from their thrones
 - iii. Instead, he had come to exalt those of humble estate
 1. And have no doubt about it, friends, Jesus hasn't changed his priorities one bit
 - a. For as we were reminded of last week, God opposes the proud, but He gives grace to the humble

2. And so, in answer to the disciples' argument about who would be the greatest among them,
 - a. Jesus said, "He who is LEAST among you all is the one who is great!"
 - i. Now, you would think that, after receiving this chastisement from their Rabbi, the disciples would have used this as a great time to shut their mouths, and think deeply about what he had just said
 - ii. You would ALSO think, that if one of them was going to keep talking and end up putting their foot in their mouth, it would have been Peter
 1. But this time, John gets the honor of completely missing the point
 - a. And so we read in verse 49...

2. Luke 9:49-50

a. ⁴⁹John answered, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he does not follow with us." ⁵⁰But Jesus said to him, "Do not stop him, for the one who is not against you is for you."

- i. We're reminded at this point that the disciples were just normal, ordinary humans... just like us
 1. Jesus rebukes them for arguing about which of THEM is the greatest
 - a. And instead of choosing the path of humility, it's almost as if John says here,
 - i. "But surely, AS A GROUP, we are the greatest, right Jesus?"
 1. I mean, you did CHOOSE us
 2. You have been pouring into just this core group
 - a. Aren't we the ONLY ones who should be able to do great works in your name?
 - b. Should we not try to stop all those other unqualified amateurs out there, so they don't mess all of this up?
 2. But Jesus honestly gives them a rather surprising response
 - a. Up to this point in the Gospels, it has only been Jesus and the disciples proclaiming the Kingdom, healing the sick, and casting out demons
 - i. But now, we're faced with this verse that says there is some guy going around who is not one of the twelve...
 1. It doesn't even appear that he is one of the crowds who have been following Jesus
 - a. And yet, he is attempting to cast out demons in the name of Jesus, and it is working!
 - b. And what does Jesus say?
 - i. "Do not stop him, for the one who is not against you is for you"
- ii. Just keeping to the context of this passage, this is really an incredible statement
 1. We know from the rest of the Scriptures that there certainly was authority given to the Apostles
 - a. They would form the leadership in the early church, as we see all throughout the book of Acts
 - b. But even in the Book of Revelation, as we see a glimpse of the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven, we read these words,
 - i. That "the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."
 - c. So, the Apostles have been given a unique position in the Church – a position that will apparently last throughout all eternity

- i. Right before Jesus teaches about those who falsely cast out demons and prophesy and do mighty works in his name, he has these words to say
 - 1. In Matthew 7:15-20, Jesus says,
 - a. *¹⁵“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.*
- c. Friends, in order to grow in our discernment of who is truly for us or who is truly against us, we must learn to become effective fruit evaluators
 - i. Now, I know that the common sentiment in our day is, “Only God knows the heart... you can’t judge someone based off of what you see on the outside.”
 - 1. But Jesus appears to be teaching otherwise in this passage, doesn’t he?
 - a. Verse 16... You will recognize them by their fruits
 - b. Verse 20... You will recognize them by their fruits
 - i. According to Strong’s, this word for “recognize” implies not just a superficial acquaintance, but a thorough and accurate knowledge
 - ii. So Jesus is telling us that it IS possible for us to have a thorough and accurate knowledge of whether or not someone’s fruit is good or bad
 - 1. So how do we get to such knowledge?
 - a. I’ll offer two suggestions...
 - d. The first is, listen CAREFULLY to their words
 - i. The most important aspect of listening carefully to their words is, what do they say about the Gospel of the Good News of Jesus Christ?
 - 1. Brothers and sisters, the Gospel is spelled out for us very explicitly throughout the whole of the Bible
 - a. The Triune God who has existed throughout all of time, according to His own counsel and will, created the heavens and the earth and all of that is within it
 - b. For His own delight and out of an overflow of the love within the Trinity, God created man in His own image
 - c. He placed man and woman, Adam and Eve in a place of unparalleled beauty and perfection, giving them everything they needed for a godly and flourishing existence
 - d. But man, because of his own inherent pride, and his own desire to rule as god over his own life, chose to disobey God’s one command – to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil
 - e. As a result of their sinful disobedience, all of mankind has been plunged into sin and death
 - f. We certainly have the free will to choose what we want to do in our lives, but the great problem is that, because of our sin nature, we will ALWAYS choose what is contrary to God’s will
 - g. And because of our willful rebellion against the God who has created us, the only thing we deserve in this life is death, and the eternal condemnation that follows afterwards
 - h. BUT GOD, in love and grace and mercy, provided a way that we could be saved

- i. Knowing that we are utterly incapable of saving ourselves, God sent His only begotten Son to provide salvation on our behalf
- j. Jesus left the glories of heaven, clothing himself in humanity, being conceived by the Holy Spirit, and born of the virgin Mary
- k. This Jesus lived an absolutely perfect and sinless life, walking in the obedience that Adam had failed to do in the Garden
- l. And this Jesus willingly went to the cross to pay for our sins
- m. The perfect and spotless Lamb of God took OUR sin upon his shoulders
- n. He paid the price we could never pay
- o. He freed us from the slavery we could never escape
- p. Jesus bore our transgressions upon the cross, and then he died and was buried in a rich man's tomb
- q. But that's not the end of the story, is it?
- r. On the third day, God raised Jesus from the dead, resurrecting him from the tomb, and proving once and for all that death has no hold upon the King!
- s. The resurrected Jesus appeared to the disciples, then appeared to many others as well, and then he ascended up to heaven where he sits at the right hand of the throne of God
- t. And just a short time after Jesus' ascension, God the Father sent the Holy Spirit to His Church, filling them with power and gifts and fruits, all for the purpose of expanding the Kingdom of Jesus Christ upon this earth
- u. And now, we have been entrusted with this singular message...
 - i. Repent from your sins
 - ii. Confess that Jesus is Lord
 - iii. Believe that he is truly the Son of God
 - 1. And you will be saved!
- ii. My friends, this is the essence of the Gospel!
 - 1. Now you can certainly elaborate on different aspects of it – we didn't even touch on Israel, or the end of the age
 - a. But at the heart of it, these statements form the foundation of our faith
- iii. So again, as you are listening to people preach and teach about the Gospel, listen carefully for any additions to this Gospel
 - 1. Do they proclaim all of these things that we have just heard, and ALSO proclaim that Jesus wants you to be healthy and wealthy and prosperous in this life?
 - a. Friends, that is simply a false gospel
 - b. We could support this argument with any number of Scriptures, but all we have to do is look at the lives of the Apostles, including the Apostle Paul
 - i. Were any of them rich?
 - ii. Were any of them in perfect health?
 - 1. I mean, if anyone would have had enough faith to claim these promises for themselves, it would have been these guys, right?
 - iii. But that wasn't the case, was it?
 - 1. We read in Acts, and in some of Paul's letters, that the Jerusalem church actually endured MUCH poverty
 - 2. We also see in Acts that the Apostles, including Paul, repeatedly were beaten and imprisoned and persecuted for their faith

3. And we know from church history that almost all of them, John excluded, met an early death, either by sword or crucifixion, or some other kind of beating
2. The false gospel of the prosperity gospel simply has no grounds upon which to stand
 - a. And yet, this is the gospel that so many are proclaiming, who are ALSO claiming to do many mighty works in the name of Jesus
 - i. And so we need to ask the simple question...
 1. Would God TRULY bless these men and women with such an outpouring of His power, as they proclaimed a gospel that so clearly deviated from the one true Gospel?
 - a. No, He would not
 3. So listen carefully to their words, friends
 - iv. But it's not just the prosperity gospel we need to be aware of
 1. We also need to listen carefully for any hints of a works-based salvation
 - a. Do they preach the Gospel that says that Jesus saves, BUT you ALSO have to do X, Y, and Z to ensure your own salvation?
 - i. God is gracious to save, BUT, you also need to make sure you continue to observe the Jewish celebrations and not eat pork or shellfish
 - ii. Jesus paid for our sins on the cross, BUT, you also need to make sure you say seven "Hail Mary's" every time you go to your priest for confession
 - iii. You have been sealed with the Holy Spirit, BUT, in order to TRULY be saved, you need to experience a SECOND baptism of the Holy Spirit to confirm your salvation
 2. Listen CAREFULLY to their words, friends
 - a. Do they add a bunch of works to the Gospel?
 - b. Do they claim things about the actions of the Holy Spirit that simply are not supported in the Scriptures?
 - c. Do they preach a different Christ than the Christ who is portrayed in the Word of God?
 - i. If so, then it matters not how many demons they cast out...
 - ii. It matters not how many people they heal...
 - iii. It matters not how many mighty works they do in the name of Jesus
 1. If these mighty works are accompanied by a false gospel that has been tampered with and twisted by our own human desire, then they ARE NOT for us
 - a. And by necessity, they are AGAINST us
 - i. You will recognize them by their fruit
 - iv. As Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 5:21,
 1. Test EVERYTHING, and hold fast to what is good!
 3. In examining the fruit of others, we must listen carefully to their words
 - e. And second, we must look CLOSELY at their actions
 - i. Brothers and sisters, let me remind you...
 1. We follow a Savior who, as we'll see in a couple of weeks, had nowhere to lay his head
 - a. He was an itinerant preacher, who traveled throughout the land, with no home, and no money to his own name
 - b. He was ridiculed by the religious leaders, rejected by the masses, and even the people of his own hometown tried to throw him off of a cliff

- c. And the consistent teaching of our Lord was this...
 - i. Die to yourself
 - ii. Don't chase after the treasures of this earth
 - iii. Sell everything, if only you might obtain the pearl of great price, the Kingdom of God
 - iv. Lose your life in this world, and gain your soul
 - 2. In light of all of these things, how have we come to the place where it is now OK for the preachers of the Word of God to live in million dollar mansions?
 - a. How is it that it has now become accepted for these shepherds to fly around the world in their own private jets?
 - b. How is it that those who live such lives of extravagance and abundance, seem to have some of the fastest growing churches in our country?
 - ii. But again, are these people who are living such lives of opulence... are they not also the same ones claiming to cast out demons in the name of Jesus?
 - 1. Are they not also the same people claiming healings in his name?
 - 2. Are they not also the same people doing mighty works, all for the glory and praise of Jesus?
 - a. Look at their fruit, friends
 - i. Jesus CLEARLY taught that his followers are to flee from all the things these preachers are pursuing,
 - 1. So do we REALLY think that God would pour out His power in and through them, as they lived their lives in direct opposition to His Word?
 - b. Are they not like the Pharisees, of whom Jesus told the people in Matthew 23:2-7...
 - i. *²The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, ³so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice. ⁴They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger. ⁵They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, ⁶and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues ⁷and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi by others.*
 - 3. My friends, these preachers may proclaim messages that sound an awful lot like the truth of God's Word
 - a. But look carefully at their lives
 - b. Examine their fruit
 - i. And if their life does not line up with the Scriptures, then it matters not how many mighty works they proclaim in the name of Jesus
 - 1. For Jesus will say to them, "Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness... for I never knew you."
 - a. And whoever Jesus does not know, is against us
5. So what do we do then?
 - a. If it has been promised that these false prophets and these false christs will be on the rise as we get closer and closer to the end of the age, then what do we do?
 - i. Do we just retreat into our nice, safe denominational bubble, where everyone believes exactly what I do, and there's never any disagreements about doctrines or practices?
 - 1. We certainly don't want to associate with those Methodists just around the corner...

- a. Or those Presbyterians downtown...
 - b. Or especially the non-denominational churches who have all gone off the rails
 - ii. Even better, can we just retreat into our nice church right here at 702 S Adams St, and just hole up with all those who have agreed to our statement of faith, and core values, and church covenant?
 - 1. Because the reality is, we've got First Baptist Church down the road...
 - a. And even though they're also a Southern Baptist Church, well, they do some things differently than we do, so we don't want to hang out with them, do we?
 - iii. Is that the answer for us?
 - 1. Do we just enter into survival mode and hide out here in our building in the hopes that Jesus will come back soon and take all of us good Baptists home?
 - b. My friends, this cannot be the answer for us
 - i. Because if the only ones who are for us are our fellow Southern Baptists who think exactly the way that we do, then the Kingdom of God is in MASSIVE trouble here on this earth!
 - 1. Believe it or not, even though some of us may have some deeply held convictions about certain doctrines, it is entirely possible that we might be flawed in our understanding of God's Word!
 - a. Last year, we spent a Wednesday evening walking through the different views on the millennial age, and what things will look like as Jesus makes all things new
 - i. We talked about some of the differences in premillennialism, and postmillennialism and amillennialism
 - 1. And we looked at the Scriptural basis for each of these beliefs
 - ii. But the overwhelming response afterwards from many people was how surprised they were that some of the giants in the history of the church actually held a different view than they did
 - 1. And, hopefully, in light of that, we began to see that there might actually be some beauty in our diversity
 - 2. That's the case when it comes to eschatology, but the same thing can be said about the doctrine of salvation and HOW one is saved
 - a. On one side, you have ardent Calvinists such as Charles Spurgeon, George Whitfield, and John MacArthur
 - b. But on the other side, you have ardent Arminians, such as John Wesley, Billy Graham, and Charles Stanley
 - i. Is it not true that God has worked through the lives of ALL of these men to expand His Kingdom, despite their completely opposite views on God's sovereignty and man's free will?
 - 1. That is absolutely true!
 - a. And so, might there be some beauty in our diversity in this area as well?
 - b. Might we actually be able to find common ground, agreeing that the other side truly IS for us, and not against us?
6. Well, if you're thinking deeply about all of these things we've been talking about this morning, there's still one big elephant in the room, isn't there?
 - a. Going back to our passage in Luke, what about those TODAY, who are casting out demons, or doing mighty works in the name of Jesus, and they ARE for us?

- i. Is that even a possibility, or should we contend against EVERYONE who performs such mighty works?
 - 1. This is another area of disagreement in the church today, isn't it?
 - a. On one hand, you have men like John MacArthur, who believe that these mighty works of the Lord have ceased, now that we have the Word of God
 - i. All of those works served to validate the testimony of the Apostles and the early church
 - 1. But now, our testimony is validated by the Scriptures, and all of these sign gifts are no longer needed
 - 2. And by default, any sign gifts exhibited today are necessarily false
 - a. This is the position known as cessationism
 - b. On the other hand, however, you have men like John Piper, who fall into the camp known as continuationism
 - i. Instead of believing that these sign gifts, these mighty works, have ceased
 - 1. They instead believe that these gifts continue on in our day, for God is the same yesterday, today, and forever
 - 2. They would affirm that, although there ARE certainly false prophets and false christs out there, and they are to be avoided, there are also men and women who continue to exercise these gifts of the Spirit, just as the church did two thousand years ago
 - a. Demons are still being cast out
 - b. Healings are still happening
 - c. Prophecies are still given
 - 2. So, which view are you to hold?
 - a. That is something YOU must pray about
 - i. YOU must dig into the Scriptures yourself
 - ii. YOU must look at what God is doing in the life of His church all around the world
 - iii. YOU must diligently study these things for yourselves
 - 1. And then, you must come to your own conviction, ALONG WITH a very strong dose of humility
- b. The reality is, when you look at the church UNIVERSAL...
 - i. When you look at how the Kingdom is advancing all around the globe
 - 1. It is advancing through DIVERSITY
 - a. On the frontlines of the spiritual battles, there are Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians
 - b. In some of the darkest places on this earth, where churches are being planted in secrecy for fear of imprisonment or death, there are both Calvinists and Arminians
 - c. Where Christ's church is being expanded and the TRUE enemy is being defeated, there are both Cessationists and Continuationists
 - 2. Some would say that all of our differences are evidence supporting the argument that Christianity is just a fake religion, and everyone is just doing whatever is right in their own eyes
 - a. I would argue that, in our diversity, there can actually be great beauty

- i. But that beauty is found ONLY if we return to what Jesus taught the disciples here in Luke chapter 9
 - 1. Not every Christian in this world will believe exactly as you do
 - 2. But do not stop them, friends...
 - a. For the one who is not against you, is FOR you!
- ii. May we be found faithful in examining the fruits of those who claim to preach Christ
 - 1. And may we ALSO be found faithful in embracing the UNIVERSAL church, as we glorify God TOGETHER in all of our differences!