

# A Simple Sermon

## Luke 9:1-6

### INTRODUCTION

In my humble but accurate opinion, one of the greatest television shows ever produced was the *Andy Griffith Show* starring Andy Griffith, Don Knotts, and Ron Howard. I'm talking about the old black-and-white episodes before Opie grew up.

One of my favorite episodes is called "What's Your Hurry?" The entire show is about the folks of Mayberry going to church. Here's a trivia question: What was the name of the church Andy, Barney and Aunt Bea attended? Answer: The All Souls Church. This particular Sunday, everybody was excited about hearing visiting preacher Dr. Breen. Andy and Barney are seen sitting together. Dr. Breen is talking about slowing down and taking it easy. In his sermon he says, *"Consider how we live our lives today. Everything is run, run, run. We bolt our breakfast, we scan the headlines, we race to the office. The full schedule and the split second: these are the gauges of success. We drive ourselves from morn to night. We have forgotten the meaning of the word relaxation. What has become of the old-fashioned ways, the simple pleasures of the past? Who can forget for example, the old-fashioned band concert at twilight on the village green? The joy, the serenity of just sitting and listening. We should strive to recapture this simple innocent pleasure. ... And so I say to you, dear friends, relax, slow down, take it easy."*

At this point the camera is on Barney and Andy. The preacher's soft voice is so soothing it is putting Barney to sleep. Some of you are familiar with that experience. First his eyes begin to cross, and he fights to stay awake, until finally his head drops to his chest and he is dozing. At that moment, Dr. Breen raises his voice and shouts, *"What's your hurry!?"* Barney jerks away and he looks like he is ready to jump up and run a race.

That afternoon they are sitting on the porch rocking after Aunt Bea's delicious Sunday lunch. They start to talk about the sermon and decide they will put it into practice. Before you know it, they are making plans to reassemble the town band, rebuild the bandstand and repair all the band uniforms. As you might expect, they get in such a hurry trying to slow down that by the end of the afternoon they are all worn out and exhausted.

It's a message that our fast-paced society needs to hear today: SIMPLIFY. In this passage, Jesus is teaching His disciples to keep it simple by trusting in God. The old medieval saint, Thomas á Kempis wrote, "By two wings man is lifted from the things of earth: simplicity and purity."

When you look at the lifestyle of Jesus, you learn He was the Master of simplicity. He could take the complex and boil it down to a story, or a phrase, or a word. In our passage today Jesus gives His disciples some simple instructions for ministry. Let's read about it in Luke 9:1-6:

**Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.**

**And He said to them, "Take nothing for the journey, neither staffs nor bag nor bread nor money; and do not have two tunics apiece. Whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. And whoever will not receive you, when you go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet as a testimony against them."**

**So they departed and went through the towns, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.**

Let's notice **four ways Jesus says we can simply serve as disciples of Jesus:**

## 1. A SIMPLE AUTHORITY FOR OUR MISSION—JESUS CHRIST.

Jesus calls His disciples together and gives them some simple instructions as He sends them out to do ministry. And He sends them with “**power and authority.**” Jesus Christ himself is our authority and power for our mission. In Matthew 28 Jesus says, “**All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.**”

As the risen Son of God Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth. And He sends his followers out with that same authority. There is only one reason for our mission: Jesus Christ. We are not here on our own agenda or for our own purposes. We are to be about His mission and His purpose.

We are privileged to live in a country where we enjoy a measure of religious freedom. But our authority for our ministry and our mission does not come from the Constitution of the United States. It comes from Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is the same power and authority that all believers enjoy, no matter what earthly governments under which they live.

Secondly, we see Jesus give to His disciples a:

## 2. A SIMPLE APPROACH TO MINISTRY—GO PREACH AND HEAL.

As Jesus sent out the Twelve on their first mission, He told them to concentrate on doing only two things. He told them to heal sick people and to preach the Good News. Jesus was simply telling them to do what they had seen Him doing. He had been going to where the people were and was touching them and teaching them. In Matthew’s account before Jesus sends out of the twelve he summarizes what Jesus had been doing:

**Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.**

**But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.”** (Matthew 9:35-38).

Jesus went about preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing hurting people. Now Jesus wants His followers to do the same kind of ministry that He does. Go preach and heal. He sends them to help hurting people and to proclaim the good news.

That’s our ministry as well. We must *go preach and heal*. Jesus never set up a ministry compound and required all the people to come to where He was. His ministry was not building-focused, it was people-focused. He was constantly walking around the region going to where the people were. Our call is to go as well.

Jesus did not have a “Field of Dreams” mentality: “Build it and they will come.” Some think that all we have to do is to build a church building and people will just flock in. But that is not Jesus’ method of ministry. He says go. I am glad that we have a nice facility here in which to gather for worship, prayer, and Bible study. But just maintaining a facility is not ministry. We have to go to where the hurting people are and tell them about Jesus. If we don’t do that, we have missed Jesus’ mission. God sent Jesus into this world and Jesus sends us out into the world.

The night before Jesus was crucified, He prayed these words concerning us: Jesus prayed, “**As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.**” (John 17:18).

The twofold task of a disciple is simple, preach and heal. Jesus didn't give us four laws or twelve steps or eighteen tasks. He simply said, "GO to where the hurting people are and help them and tell them that I love them." Our mission is to where the people are, showing them the love of Jesus by what we do and what we say.

That's not just the preacher's job, or the deacons' job or the church staff's job. It is the JOB #1 for every disciple of Jesus.

Next, Jesus gives us:

### **3. A SIMPLE ATTITUDE TOWARD POSSESSIONS—DON'T LET "STUFF" SLOW YOU DOWN**

Do you or someone you know tend to over-pack before you take a trip? I heard some great advice from someone who has been on lots of trips overseas for mission projects: *Pack what you think you'll need and then take half of it out of your suitcase.*

Notice the packing instructions of Jesus. He not only told His disciples to pack light for their mission, He told them not to pack anything at all! They weren't to take a suitcase, extra clothes, food, money or even a walking stick! Some have misunderstood His words to mean we should never prepare for ministry. I don't believe that Jesus was teaching us to approach life and ministry unprepared. Elsewhere, Jesus clearly taught that before a man builds a tower, he must first sit down and calculate the cost. We are to be prepared in what we do for the Lord.

Jesus was teaching them to trust Him more than their own resources. Since they couldn't take money, they would have to depend on His Word that strangers would show them hospitality. Since they couldn't take food, they would have to *really* pray, "**Give us this day our daily bread.**" Since they couldn't even take a walking stick, they would have to depend on Jesus for their strength on the long journey. Jesus sent them into an environment of need requiring both faith and obedience. God is looking for people of faith. It's like He is asking: "How much do you trust me?"

How different that is from most of us. We pack our suitcases to overflowing because we like having our precious "stuff" with us. But when we are loaded down with our own stuff, we often depend on our possessions rather than on God. Are you trusting God to provide your needs, or are you trusting your job, your bank balance, or your retirement account to meet your needs? Jesus issues a strong warning in Luke 16:13: "**No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.**" Living a life of simplicity demands we love God rather than possessions.

Jesus did not preach the American dream. He did preach prosperity and success. He preached the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. And He said His kingdom is not of this world.

Over the past 20 years one of the fastest growing businesses in America has been the storage business. I can remember growing up, you never saw storage garages people would pay money to rent to store their stuff in. Today, it is a booming business. What does that say? We have so much stuff that we can't even keep it all in our houses; we have to rent additional space just to store our stuff.

Okay, if we are supposed to pack light, who is going to take care of us? God will. How will He do it? Look again at the words of Jesus. He knew in every village there were people who would respond to those who came announcing the Good News. Jesus required His disciples to depend on the generosity and hospitality of the people in each village. God uses different sources to meet the needs of His people. He fed the children of Israel for forty years by giving them manna every morning. God could have done that here, but instead, He was going to use the hospitality of good people to meet the physical and material needs of His servants.

Some people are always looking for a radical, supernatural miracle when God sometimes simply works miracles through human instrumentality. In other words God gives us stuff so we can share it with others and when we have a need they can share their stuff with us.

Do you need to unpack your suitcase a little bit? You say, “What am I going to do with all my stuff?” Why don’t you become like the people Jesus said would freely help His disciples in need? In other words, find a disciple of Jesus who has a need and give some of your stuff to them. Lighten your load and see if you don’t enjoy the journey a little more.

#### **4. A SIMPLE ACT TO DEAL WITH FAILURE—SHAKE OFF THE DUST AND MOVE ON**

Jesus told the disciples that if they were not accepted in a certain village to “**shake the dust off their garments as a testimony against them.**” This bit of instruction has been misunderstood by people who see it as some kind of a “curse” or “punishment” directed toward that city.

But I’m not sure that’s what Jesus intended. Later in this very chapter, He passed through a Samaritan city and they refused to let Him enter. Some of the disciples were so insulted they asked Jesus to call down fire from heaven to burn up that city. Jesus refused to punish the city and He rebuked His disciples. He explained He didn’t come to destroy life but to give life.

When Jesus told them to “**shake the dust off their clothes**” He was teaching a spiritual principle that we need to understand and practice today. If a pair of disciples entered a certain city and began to talk about Jesus, they faced the possibility of rejection. If the people didn’t accept them or their message, they might feel like they had failed. The act of “shaking off the dust” was a symbolic way of saying, “I don’t want anything in that city to remain on me. I don’t want their bitterness, their rejection, and their lack of faith to remain part of me.” Jesus didn’t want their feeling of failure to bog them down. Instead, He told them to just shake it off and move on to the next village.

Evangelist Jay Strack has written a book entitled *Shake off the Dust*. Jay was physically and emotionally abused as a child. He started doing drugs when he was 13 and by the time he was 16, he was hooked and was dealing drugs to pay for his habit. He was busted and found himself as a teenage junkie and criminal. He met Jesus, but it took him a long time to shake off the dirt and dust of his troubled past. In his book, he writes, “*As long as you remain a prisoner to your past, you will never know the freedom of the future. You can’t spend the rest of your life sitting in the ashes of devastation, crying over what went wrong. You’d don’t have to carry around the dirt of your past mistakes. Get up, shake off the dust, and go on.*”

Some of you are carrying around a load of dust and dirt from your past. You have failed, and been hurt. And that hurt or failure is dragging you down and holding you back. There is a voice in your head that keeps telling you that you are a rotten failure and you’ll never be anything else—that there is no hope for you. Let me tell you, that voice of condemnation does not come from God. It comes from Satan. The Bible calls him “the accuser of the brethren.” Satan and his demons love to slip up to Christians and whisper, “You’re no good, you’re a failure, you’re not worth it.”

Even the very best followers of God stumble and fall at times. Judas and Peter both failed. Judas betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. Peter denied Jesus three times. What was the difference between Judas and Peter? Judas went out in despair and hung himself. On the other hand, although Peter felt as badly as Judas did, he recognized his failure, he wept bitterly at his mistake and then he got up, and shook of the dust from his failure, and moved on.

The Bible says in Proverbs 24:16: “**For though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again, but the wicked are brought down by calamity.**” Maybe you have fallen and failed the Lord but get up and shake off the dust and move on. Don’t become a victim of your past. You can’t do anything about your past mistakes except learn from them. But once you have recognized your mistake, move on.

I love the words of the Apostle Paul in Philippians 3:13-14, “**This one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal ...**” Here was a man who at one time opposed Jesus to the point of having Christians executed for their heresy. He stood by, consenting to the brutal stoning of Stephen. I’m sure the devil would have loved to have kept that image before Paul but he shook off the dust from his past and kept on moving ahead.

Have you failed morally? Shake off the dust and keep on moving ahead. Have you failed relationally? Shake off the dust—keep on moving ahead. Have you failed financially, or in some business? Stand up, shake off the dust and try again. Jesus is not through with you yet.

Thomas Edison once worked for months to find a filament that would burn for more than a few seconds for his incandescent light bulb. He tried over 700 filaments and each one was a failure. One reporter interviewed Edison and said, “It must be frustrating to work so hard and see no results.” Edison replied, “Oh, I have lots of results. I know 700 things that *won’t* work!”

Is there some dirty, dusty experience or failure from your past still lingering on your character? What a simple way to deal with failure: shake off the dust and move on. How do we do that? Tell it to Jesus.

I love the old hymn that says,

Are you weary, are you heavy hearted?  
Tell it to Jesus, tell it to Jesus.  
Are you grieving over joys departed?  
Tell it to Jesus alone.

Do the tears flow down your cheeks unbidden?  
Tell it to Jesus, tell it to Jesus.  
Have you sins that to men’s eyes are hidden?  
Tell it to Jesus alone.

*Tell it to Jesus, tell it to Jesus,  
He is a Friend that’s well known.  
You’ve no other such a friend or brother,  
Tell it to Jesus alone.*

Isn’t that what the Gospel of Jesus Christ is all about? The Bible says we are all sinners. We have all failed and fallen short of the kingdom of God. But God does not leave us there in our failure. Instead, He took the initiative and sent His Son Jesus to be the Savior of the World. Jesus carried our sins and failures on Himself when He went to the cross. He took the just penalty for our sin, dying in our place. And God validated His sacrifice by raising Jesus from the dead and seating Him at His right hand on the heavenly throne.

Now Jesus offers forgiveness of sin, and eternal life to all who come to Him. It is so simple: believe in Jesus. Trust Him to save you from your sin. Trust Him to give you a new life.