

Preparation for the Harvest (Luke 9:37-48)



A series of powerful events have been taking place in the disciples' lives. They have just come back from a powerful mission trip, amazed at the authority and power given to them in Jesus' name. Then there was the miraculous feeding of the five thousand, followed by the revelation of Christ given to Peter – a major turning point in Jesus' ministry.

This was topped off by the supernatural encounter on the Mount of Transfiguration, where Peter, James and John witnessed the glory of Jesus Christ with Moses and Elijah appearing before Him. And soon Jesus was about to send out seventy disciples on another apostolic mission.

But when the disciples came down from the dazzling heights of the mountain top, they had to face just how unprepared they were for the task ahead. And Jesus addresses specific areas of deficiencies in them that they were to examine and repent of.

A. Powerlessness (9:37-42)

1. Jesus' Frustration – At the bottom of Mt Hermon the disciples plunged straight into the ditch. Just as Moses faced great frustration when he came down from Mt. Sinai after the glorious encounter with the Lord, so also Jesus was met with a scene at the foot of Mt Hermon that tried his patience. His disciples have been powerless to deliver a demonised boy amid the pleas from the boy's father.

Here we have a glimpse into Jesus' humanity. Can we hear his frustration here, *“O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here.”*

2. Faithless and perverse Generation – This is how Jesus described His generation. In God's eyes an 'unbelieving generation' is also a 'perverse generation.' How Jesus would describe our generation? *Could Jesus be expressing similar feelings towards the powerlessness of His Church today?*

This incident takes place between the two apostolic missions. The first apostolic mission saw the twelve being sent out with power. The second apostolic mission would see seventy being sent out. Just a few weeks ago, the twelve cast out demons and healed the sick (Luke 9:1-6). So why couldn't they do it now?

Most likely, following the great success of their first apostolic mission, they became too confident in themselves and complacent - no longer plugged into Jesus' power.

3. The Cost of Anointing – Jesus' disciples asked Him privately, *“Why could we not cast it out?”* Jesus replied, *“This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.”* (Mark 9:28-29) In other words, Jesus is telling them, *“If you want your faith to be vibrant and alive, you need to stay plugged into Me. Yesterday's anointing is not going to be enough for today's challenges. You need to stay plugged in to Me daily.”* There is a cost attached to the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Are we willing to pay the price for that precious anointing for today? Our generation wants to have the fullness of God, but unwilling to pay the price.

If the mountain top encounters unveiled Jesus' glory, these incidents at the bottom of the mountain reveals how unprepared Jesus' disciples were, even as Jesus was about to send out the second wave of apostolic mission to reach for greater harvest of souls!

I believe the Church is at the same point. How important it is for the Church to get ready.

B. Spiritual Deafness (9:43-45)

1. *“Let these words sink down to your ears, for the Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men.”* (9:44) This was a sacred moment. Jesus was trying to say something that was very important and deeply personal to Him. It was a sacred revelation

For the very first time Jesus talks about the personal betrayal that was coming to Him. Nothing cuts as deep as betrayal from a trusted friend, and He was reaching out to those closest to Him. In the presence of the would-be betrayer! Judas Iscariot has already grown too fond of the money bag, from which he helped himself. Note, Judas Iscariot was given many opportunities to repent. Up to this point Jesus never mentioned the coming betrayal. This is another 'turning point' in Jesus' ministry.

2. *“But they did not understand this saying, and it was hidden from them so that they did not perceive it. And they were afraid to ask Him about this saying.” (9:45).* There was spiritual deafness in all of Jesus’ twelve disciples. They could not hear this from Jesus because they were not terribly interested in Jesus’ concerns, but their mind was occupied elsewhere. What were they interested in? Next verse reveals what they were preoccupied with – ‘Who was the greatest among them?’

Let’s remind ourselves of apostle Paul’s confession in Phil 3:10, *“That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”*

C. Spiritual Pride (9:46-48)

1. *“Then a dispute arose among them as to which of them would be greatest.” (9:46).*

This happened just one day after the Trio - Peter, James and John - received the most stunning revelation ever given to mankind – the divine glory of Jesus Christ. What did this divine encounter produce in Peter, James and John? Not humility, but spiritual pride. Within one day of this supernatural encounter, they started quarrelling among themselves who would be the greatest among them! When Jesus asked, “So what did you talk about on the road?” they were thoroughly embarrassed (Mark 9:33-34).

Can a true revelation from the Lord also bring about spiritual pride? Absolutely. Look at the apostles.

Consider apostle Paul’s emphatic confession, *‘And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.’ (2 Cor 12:7)*

We must watch out for subtle spiritual pride. Sometimes we can have mixed motives, even in our hunger for spiritual things.

2. I believe the Lord has granted much revelation and spiritual encounters to the Church in the past two decades or so, but I am afraid that those spiritual encounters didn’t produce much humility in the body of Christ.

What did it produce? (1) ‘Spiritual pride’; (2) ‘Sectarianism’ along with (3) ‘individualism’ and (4) ‘sheer lack of spiritual accountability’.

People refuse to be accountable and submitted to any authority, and especially to the local church. These traits of inability to be accountable are not the fruit of humility, but subtle spiritual pride. I am afraid the Lord will begin to judge these attitudes of spiritual pride in the body of Christ, which manifests in ‘sectarianism’, ‘individualism’ and ‘refusal to be submitted to the Body and be accountable’.

Now is not the time to be like a branch cut off on our own by the roadside. Jesus warned about the false prophets in the last days. These are not necessarily witches and mediums. Many of them are Christians prophetically gifted and able to receive revelations, but because of unclean motives in their hearts that they haven’t repented of, they are also a wide, open channel to receive false dreams and visions, and false revelations as well. The book of Jeremiah clearly warns us of this.

3. This lesson on “pride vs humility” was so important to Jesus, that He ‘acted it out’ to the disciples’ embarrassment, so that they could never forget it. Jesus placed a little child beside Himself and probably put His arm around the child and said, *“Whoever receives this little child in My name receives Me and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me. For He who is least among you all will be great.”*

Jesus drums it into them that :

- A. The truly great people are those who give their time and energy to the ‘unimportant person’ like this little child. We are never too important to serve the little people and to serve in menial tasks.
- B. The truly great people are those who don’t consider themselves great. They don’t suffer from self-importance.

Were the disciples’ faces turning red? I believe during this time of transition we are in, many who are in the place of leadership position in the body of Christ will get reshuffled.

Now is the time to ‘actively humble ourselves.’