

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Luke 9:1-6

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. For the next two weeks, I will be serving in Taiwan. Thank the Lord for using modern technology so that we can continue to share God's word daily. For this we give thanks. At the same time, we ask God to bless the saints in Taiwan who are hosting us, that in the course of our service we may richly enjoy the love and supply of the saints. This week, we will read Luke chapter 9. Today, we will read verses 1-6.

Verse 1: "Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases."

This was during the middle period of Jesus' earthly ministry. The twelve disciples had followed Him for some time, watching Him heal the sick, preach, and cast out demons. Now the time had come for Jesus to send them out on their own. It was like a final examination before graduation. They had to go out independently and face whatever situations might arise. But before sending them, Jesus first gave them power and authority.

Authority is the source of power; power is the expression of authority. Power without authority is unlawful. Authority without power cannot be manifested. Jesus sent them out, granting them authority and giving them power so that they could cast out all demons and heal all kinds of diseases.

The Gospel of Matthew records that Jesus sent them out. In Mark 6:7, the corresponding passage especially says that He "sent them out two by two." In other words, when the disciples were sent, they did not act alone. They always had companions, learning to serve together and to coordinate with one another. How

were they paired? The corresponding passage in Matthew 10:2 lists the twelve disciples in pairs, forming six teams.

The first pair was Simon and Andrew—brothers. Simon tended to move quickly and liked to take the lead, while Andrew was especially good at bringing others and helping behind the scenes. This was a very fitting pair. The second pair was James and his brother John—also brothers. We know they were also called “Sons of Thunder,” which suggests that both had strong tempers. We can imagine that in their service there must have been much learning and adjustment between them.

The third pair was two good friends, Philip and Bartholomew. Bartholomew is Nathanael. Nathanael followed Jesus through Philip’s introduction. Both were true Israelites, sincere and genuinely for God’s kingdom.

The fourth pair was Thomas and Matthew the tax collector. Thomas was doubtful by nature. When Jesus first appeared to the disciples after His resurrection, Thomas was not present. When others told him, he said that unless he put his finger into the print of the nails, he would not believe. He believed only what he could see. Matthew, on the other hand, was a tax collector and therefore wealthy. One was doubtful; the other was well-off.

The fifth pair was James the son of Alphaeus and Thaddaeus. The Bible records little about these two. They were likely quiet individuals. Putting two quiet people together in one team to preach the gospel, heal the sick, and cast out demons must have brought various challenges. The last pair was Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who later betrayed Jesus. Both were politically minded and passionate about the restoration of Israel. We can imagine that in their service it would have been easy to stir up patriotic fervor, somewhat like political movements today.

Verse 2: “He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.”

Their purpose in going out was simple: to preach the kingdom of God. John the Baptist’s ministry was to say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” But

when Jesus sent out His twelve disciples, they proclaimed that the kingdom of God had already come.

In the process of preaching, they also healed the sick. Healing was the manifestation of power, while preaching the kingdom of God was the exercise of authority. The same principle applies today. Whenever you go out for the sake of God's kingdom and have no other means to face various situations, God grants you power under the authority of proclaiming His kingdom. If miraculous power is not connected to the kingdom of God and does not proceed from the message of the kingdom, then such miracles are unlawful.

Verses 3–4: “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.’”

The tunic refers to an inner garment. Jesus sent His disciples to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As Jesus Himself indicated elsewhere, a laborer deserves his support. He sent them to proclaim the kingdom of God, and the gospel would become their provision.

He instructed them not to take a staff, bag, food, money, or even an extra garment. Wherever they entered a house, they were to stay there and depart from there, receiving blessing from that household.

Verse 5: “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.”

Israel was originally God's chosen people. When the disciples were sent to the house of Israel, they had authority to stay in any home and receive support so that the message of the kingdom could advance. This principle applied during the middle period of Jesus' ministry.

After the disciples had received sufficient training, Jesus sent them out two by two to the house of Israel. They were to be received by the Israelites. If people did not receive them, they were to testify against them by shaking off the dust from their feet.

However, this principle during the middle period of Jesus' ministry was later changed at the end of His earthly ministry. This is clearly recorded in Luke 22:35, "And He said to them, 'When I sent you without money bag, knapsack, and sandals, did you lack anything?' So they said, 'Nothing.'" This question refers back to the sending in Luke 9. Then in verse 36, "Then He said to them, 'But now, he who has a money bag, let him take it, and likewise a knapsack; and he who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one.'" Why? Because this was now the end of Jesus' earthly ministry. The house of Israel had largely rejected Him and would soon betray and crucify Him. Their guilt was established. Therefore Jesus told His disciples to take a money bag and knapsack, and even to buy a sword.

After Jesus' death and resurrection, when the church was established and the gospel began to spread to the Gentiles, the principle of sending changed again. In 3 John 1:5–6 it says, "Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers, who have borne witness of your love before the church. If you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well." And verses 7–8, "Because they went forth for His name's sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth."

Thus today the principle of preaching the gospel is this: workers are sent out by the church. When they arrive at their destination, they should seek out the local church or local saints and be received by them, giving the local believers the opportunity to become fellow workers for the truth.

When we carry out such ministry, we take nothing from unbelieving Gentiles. God's people have the privilege of offering and participating in the work of His kingdom. Unbelievers do not yet have this privilege. Once they are saved and become citizens of God's kingdom, then they may share in its work. This is a truth the church must

clearly understand, for it preserves the church's purity. The church exists in this world for the expansion of God's kingdom. If we cannot maintain our purity, it will be difficult to be God's testimony.

Verse 6: "So they departed and went through the towns, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere."

Clearly, Jesus' training of His disciples was very successful. These six teams went out through the towns, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere, spreading the name of Jesus.

The Lord's sending continues even today. In the Gospels, Jesus personally sent out the twelve disciples. Today, in His church, He continues to send out workers for His kingdom. Every church that belongs to the Lord should participate in this sending for the expansion of God's kingdom. Likewise, every church should supply and receive workers sent from elsewhere, so that together we may share in the gospel and the spreading of the truth. What a beautiful thing this is.

Personally, I am greatly blessed to have served in several different churches and to have experienced the richness of God's kingdom and the love of the saints in God's household. This itself is a wonderful testimony of God's kingdom.

Let us pray together: Lord, we thank and worship You for the churches You have given us and for the saints within them. Whenever we go out in Your name and receive the hospitality of the saints, enjoying the rich reality of Your kingdom, we cannot but give thanks. It is because of Your death and redemption that You have purchased so many saints who love You and are willing to offer their portion for the expansion of Your kingdom.

Lord, remember every saint who offers himself and every church that cooperates with Your kingdom. May Your grace abound among us, that together we may testify to the beauty of Your kingdom. Thank You. Bless each one of us in our service. We pray in the Holy Name of Jesus Christ.