

## Declaration of Dependence

It is the first Sunday of the month, more specifically of course, it is the first Sunday of **July**.

Independence Day was yesterday... a day when we celebrate our Country, and the ideals to which we aspire. We celebrate the way we have achieved these ideals in many ways, and we remember that our pursuit of these ideals remains a work in progress.

We, rightly I believe, thank God for our Country. We pray that God would bless our Country. And we look to God for guidance and strength and courage to continue to *work out* these ideals. Perhaps, chiefly, we remember some of the opening words of our 244-year-old Declaration of Independence:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

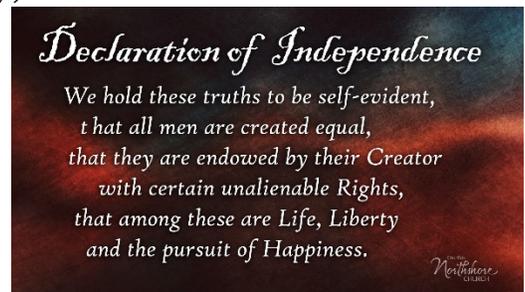
God help us to live up to these ideals; that all people are created equal. That all people bear the image of God, our Creator. And that all equally deserve full life, full liberty, and freedom to pursue happiness.

In these words declaring *independence*, there is also a strongly implied declaration of ***dependence***... that whatever freedoms we have and rights we pursue are dependent on God, our creator.

What is *implied* in our Nation's Declaration of Independence is **plain** in our *Declaration of Dependence* spread before us today.

We have prepared the Bread and the Cup to, again, declare our dependence on God. By receiving the Bread and the Cup, we declare that we believe in Jesus. Take it and believe... believe again, or perhaps even believe today for the first time.

With these symbols, we declare that the freedoms we enjoy are a gift from God. That our independence is derived from whom we depend on.

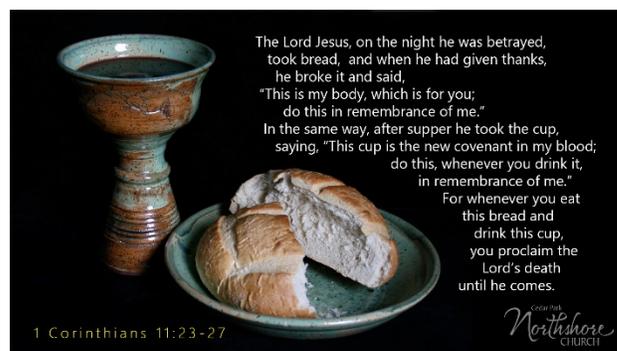


As a People, an American People, we are independent from other governments, of course. But as persons, we are, of course, dependent. We are not created to be alone. We are dependent on one another, and we are dependent on the systems we build and operate together. We are dependent on governments, corporations, families, organizations, and even churches. We don't (can't) go it alone. There is always dependence mixed with our independence.

Ultimately, of course, we are dependent on God. It is from God that our rights and independence flow.

The Bread and the Cup were ordained by Jesus to rehearse our dependence on Him. Jesus came to proclaim freedom. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And that true freedom, that independence, comes most genuinely through dependence on Him.

The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, <sup>24</sup> and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." <sup>25</sup> In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." <sup>26</sup> For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. <sup>1</sup>



With the Bread, we declare our dependence on His Body. Jesus humbled Himself, laying aside the Glory of God, and took on flesh. He identified with us humans fully, in the flesh... and that gave that flesh so we could be identified as His for all eternity.

We receive the Bread as a declaration of dependence on His Body.

With the Cup, we declare our dependence on His Blood. The Blood of Jesus was spilled to wash us clean before our Holy God. We stand righteous, truly free from sin, because of our dependence on Him.

We receive the Cup as a declaration of dependence on His Blood.

Worship is a declaration of dependence. We declare Him worthy of all praise and exaltation, thanking Him for all He has done and is doing.

<sup>1</sup> [The New International Version](#). (2011). (1 Co 11:23–26). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

# Training Camp

We are back to hearing the Words of Jesus from the Gospel of Luke, today with the first six verses of chapter 9.

Let's get right to today's passage.

When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases,<sup>2</sup> and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.<sup>3</sup> He told them: "Take nothing for the journey—no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra shirt.<sup>4</sup> Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town.<sup>5</sup> If people do not welcome you, leave their town and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them."<sup>6</sup> So they set out and went from village to village, proclaiming the good news and healing people everywhere.<sup>2</sup>

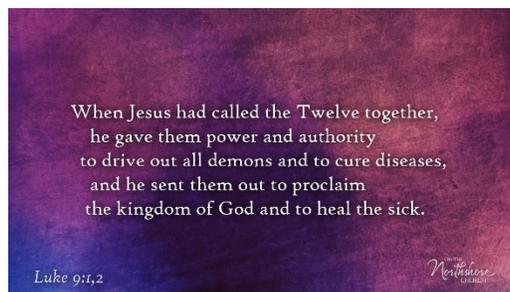
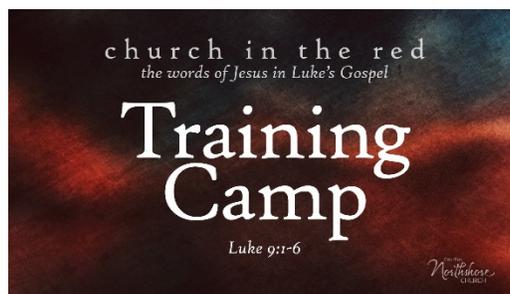
When recalling a story, it is important to have the right timeline in mind.

Maybe you are like me; sometimes I get timelines jumbled. I get things out of order in my own memory of past events and sometimes need to carefully think through things to be sure I have them in the right order. Anyone else like that. I remember doing that thing, but was that when we lived in Minneapolis? Was it when we lived at 2801 Park? Well, no... Alex was around so it must have been when we lived at Landmark Circle, before Donny came along. Does anyone else order things on a timeline like that?

It happens with made up stories too, right? Perhaps you watch Star Wars or Star Trek, or the Marvel movies. It is easy to get things out of order since series like these have long timelines, and they jump around on the timeline when they add various parts of the story. The first Star Wars was episode 4, released decades before episode 1, for example.

It is a common literary device to jump around on a timeline, with flashbacks and such. To best understand, we have to keep track of the timeline.

With today's passage, it is really important to consider the timeline.



<sup>2</sup> [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Lk 9:1–6). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

So, for example, with today's passage it is easy for me to lose track of the timeline. When I read this about the Twelve, I don't find it all that startling because it **is** *the Apostles* after all. These were the founders of the Church. Most gave their lives as martyrs for the Gospel. These twelve were special... but were they special yet? This is merely Luke 9 (of 24 chapters in Luke). We are a long way off from Acts 2 when the Holy Spirit baptized them with power... a long way off from the Great Commission... even a long way off from Palm Sunday, Good Friday, and Easter.

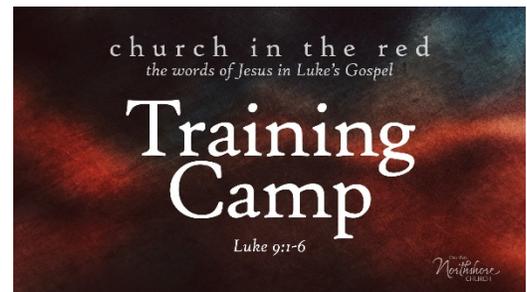
Up until now, apart from being called by Jesus, there is nothing extraordinary about these twelve. In fact, so far, they have been quite ordinary... so ordinary that they lack faith and insight. These were the ones who, just a few verses before, were certain that they were going to die in a storm on the Sea of Galilee. So far, these guys have demonstrated themselves as fairly faithless and clueless.

And (spoiler alert) they will demonstrate that they continue to be fairly faithless and clueless in the chapters ahead.

Yet, here we are with this account in Luke 9.

I called this message Training Camp because that is on the minds of many as pro sports attempts to fire up in spite of COVID. We're promised some NBA from the bubble at Disney World. We're promised a short baseball season, with the Mariners in training camp down at T-Mobile park now in preparation. And the NFL expects to be getting teams back together for camp soon. It seems to me that what we have in these verses is a sort of *training camp* for the Apostles.

For the past few messages, at the end of Luke 8, I've been saying that Jesus was putting into practice what He had been preaching, that by calming the storm, delivering the demoniac, healing the woman, and raising the girl from her deathbed, Jesus was demonstrating what He had been preaching. Now, in the text before us, Jesus called, empowered, and released His Disciples to do the same... ready or not.



Let's walk through the passage and see what we might learn and apply to ourselves.

When Jesus had called the Twelve together<sup>3</sup>

Who were these Twelve?

We know their names because they are listed in Luke 6. We know some were fishermen, a few brothers, one was a former tax collector, and (perhaps most remarkably) one was a traitor. Judas Iscariot was in the mix; Judas was included and experienced all of this with the others.

Apparently, even such an experience won't necessarily keep someone on track, or keep ourselves on track. That is a worthwhile takeaway. Just because God is using someone, or us, doesn't guarantee integrity down the road.

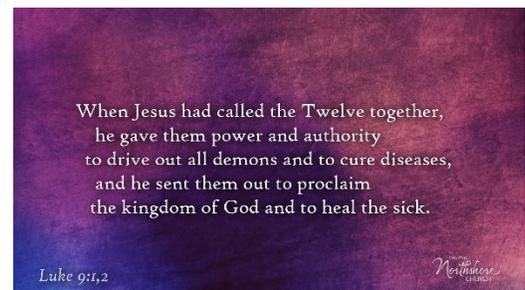
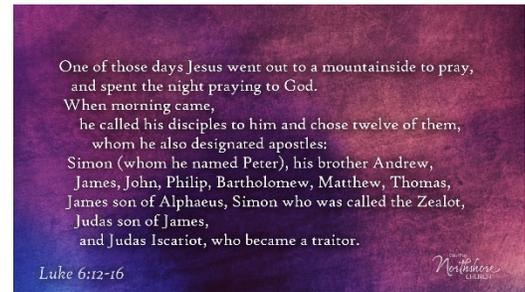
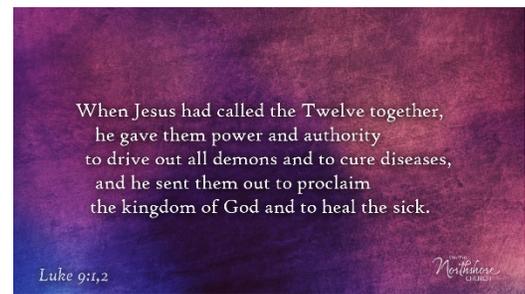
When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases<sup>4</sup>

This says more about Jesus than it does about the Twelve. Remember, this is long before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, long before the birth of the Church, even long before Jesus fulfilled His mission on earth.

On the big timeline, this is more like Old Testament times than New Testament times. Just like God had done in the past, choosing and empowering prophets and judges and even kings, God was doing this now with the Twelve. Just as those like Sampson and Gideon and Moses and Elisha were chosen and empowered, these Twelve were chosen and empowered.

But this time Jesus gave them power and authority. Like I said, this says a lot about Jesus. This further clarifies that Jesus is God... not merely filled with the power of God Himself, but having power to delegate His power and authority in a way that only God can do.

Jesus called them. Jesus empowered them. And Jesus sent them.



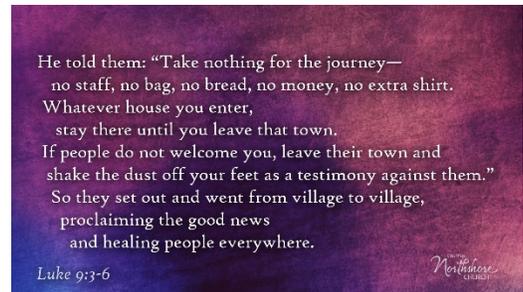
<sup>3</sup> [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Lk 9:1). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

<sup>4</sup> [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Lk 9:1). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> He told them: “Take nothing for the journey—no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra shirt.<sup>6</sup>

This is another continuation of a theme. There is this theme of putting what is preached into practice. And there is this theme of learning... learning about faith.



Jesus called the Twelve to not rely on themselves, but to trust Him in faith. No money, no food, no tools of the trade, nothing for self-defense, not even a change of clothes, this call was a call to faith. This wasn't necessarily the pattern for their future work, and not necessarily the prescription for any of us as we follow Jesus and endeavor to work with and for Jesus... but this was the call for this lesson of faith.

<sup>4</sup> Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town.<sup>7</sup>

This was a further call to faith, as well as a call to perseverance and self-denial. In that culture, hospitality for a visitor was expected; it wasn't at all startling that Jesus would send His Disciples with the expectation that they would be hosted in homes. But it might have been startling that they should stick with the first home they entered. They were not to accept any upgrades when offered. It would have been typical for a traveler to seek the best option. Perhaps they would land one place for a night, but secure something better for a few nights following, and maybe something even better for more days and weeks. But Jesus called these to stick with what they first found, to bloom wherever they found themselves planted.

This would likely be a startling message for our culture too, right? We routinely are looking for the next step up, to take the next rung on the ladder. I'm certainly not opposed to promotions and advancement and improvements and all... but perhaps this example might cause us to be sure to be mindful of God's leading and will as we advance.

<sup>5</sup> If people do not welcome you, leave their town and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them."<sup>8</sup>

This, too, is an important message for followers of Jesus; there will not always be welcome. There will even be opposition.

<sup>5</sup> [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Lk 9:2). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

<sup>6</sup> [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Lk 9:3). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

<sup>7</sup> [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Lk 9:4). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

<sup>8</sup> [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Lk 9:5). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

The whole business about shaking the dust off feet is not so much about cursing the opposition; it is way more about moving on. When doing good, especially when proclaiming the Gospel through words and deeds, it is often a matter of moving forward... not getting hung up on discouragement or fighting a battle that won't be won, but moving forward with God's calling, empowerment, and guidance.

So... which is it? Do we stay or do we go? Yes. We stay where welcomed and making progress (even slow progress) and we go when there is no traction... all with God's leading.

<sup>6</sup> So they set out and went from village to village, proclaiming the good news and healing people everywhere. <sup>9</sup>

Ready or not, they did what Jesus called, empowered, and sent them to do.

Imperfectly? For sure. It didn't stick... we'll see not with any of them, and certainly not Judas Iscariot.

But meaningfully.

It says they proclaimed ***the good news***, what we would understand as *The Gospel*, but it wasn't the full Gospel we understand. The full Gospel we understand includes the Body and the Blood, that which we remembered and proclaimed with Communion today. The full Gospel includes Good Friday and Easter Sunday, the suffering, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. The full Gospel includes Pentecost too, the birth of the Church with the filling and empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

Imperfect and incomplete? Sure... but meaningful, and an encouragement to us.

It is back to that Training Camp metaphor. We can learn and prepare with knowledge; we can memorize the playbook. We can watch and learn, whether from the stands or on tape... or even through historical accounts. But there is nothing like hands on experience. We put on the equipment, the uniform and pads and such, and give it a try.

And it is not merely about engaging with the work, it is engaging with the workers. There are bonds that are built only through working together. I've found that the best way for me to get to know someone is to get to work with them. If you want to really know me, let's work together.

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<sup>9</sup> [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Lk 9:6). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Here's the thing... Jesus invites us to not only work for Him; He invites us to work with Him. If you want to really know Jesus, get to work with Him.

Today's text encourages us that we don't need to have it all figured out. It even encourages us that we don't need to have everything lined up and in place.

Is there something ahead for you to do with and for Jesus? (If your answer is something like "I don't know," let me help you. There is always something to do with and for Jesus. It turns out that there is an entire manual that we can put into action.)

Take a step of faith in that direction. Here God's call, receive God's power, and go with God's sending. See what we might learn... and see what God might do.

Father, thank You for Your Word and the conviction, encouragement, and instruction that comes from it. It is life to us. Today we declare our dependence on You again, looking to You not merely for salvation, but for every freedom we enjoy, chiefly freedom from sin. We also look to you for calling, empowerment, and sending. Give us gifts of opportunity to work for and with You. Give us gifts of courage and faith to step forward. Jesus, we believe. Jesus, I believe. It is in Your great Name, the Name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

