

Text of a message delivered by Grant Harris at Windsor Park Baptist Church on Sunday 30th November 2025.
The written text may vary from the spoken/video version due to time and flexibility.



More Than Fans: Luke 9:1-51

Today we look at Luke 9, where Jesus invites His disciples, and us, to move from simply admiring Him to truly following Him. We'll be asking what it means to trust Jesus enough to step out, surrender, and participate in His mission. It's a gentle but challenging call to take the next faithful step.

Introduction: Take the jump

Our family camped for many years at Motutere Bay on the eastern shore of Lake Taupō. Close to our campsite was Bulli Point (or *Te Pōporo*) which is a popular spot for rock jumping. It's so popular that the singer Lorde mentions jumping off Bulli in her 2021 song, *Oceanic Feeling*. You can't be half-hearted to jump off Bulli, you're either fully in, or fully out, and not everyone jumps when they get to the top.

As we come to the end of Jesus' opening ministry section in Luke Chapters 1–9, we hear Jesus asking a confronting question that we want to deliberately leave with you until the second term of next year when we kick back in to our second block of our series, **King and Kingdom Come**. We're having this break because the first nine chapters leave us with a lot to think about. You might like to read those chapters again a few times, or maybe you'd like to reflect on the previous eight messages that several of us have spoken – you can find them on our website or on our app or on most podcast platforms.

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Growing up / maturing

The question that Jesus leaves us with is really the question I asked my kids as they grew up visiting Bulli Point, ‘*Are you committed, or not? Because if you’re committed, there’s no turning back.*’ Over time, all our kids committed to the jump and experienced the exhilaration of popping back up out of the cold Lake Taupō waters – after their first jump, they knew they were growing up and maturing. This analogy is true for us when it comes to spiritual growth. The question that Jesus asks us today about commitment is one that we answer many times as we grow and mature, because spiritual growth is a slow lifelong process. The more we commit to what Jesus asks of us, the more we take a jump into the life that Jesus has for us, and the more we experience the exhilaration of popping up knowing who we are and whose we are, and then we’ll find increasing joy in being involved in being the answer to the prayer that we often ask for, “*Your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.*”

Luke: Recap

Last week Kevin touched on Luke 8 in his enthusiastic challenge to allow the seed of God to germinate in the good soil of our hearts. Eighteen of you accepted the challenge to allow that seed to be sprinkled into the lives of children as part of Tearfund’s partnership with Compassion International in the Cebu area of the Philippines. We collectively now sponsor 98 children (can we get 2 more?!). A very generous response, thank you.

In Luke 8 we scanned through several stories where Jesus’ power was on graphic display. In Verses 22-25 he calms a storm; in Verses 26-38 he heals a demon-possessed man, which annoyed a certain pig farmer! In Verses 40-48 he healed a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, and in Verses 49-56 he brought life back to Jairus’ daughter. These stories continue the pattern we’ve seen in previous chapters of Jesus helping, healing, and giving hope to the broad spectrum of his society - friends and enemies, rich and poor, the ins and the outs – Jesus is the Saviour for all people, and all barriers are broken down through him. This was deeply challenging to those who were watching on, and it remains deeply challenging to us all these years later – the inclusivity of Jesus confronts our societal perceptions about who

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Jesus came to save, even when we quote John 3:16 that says, **“For God so loved the world ...”**
There are no boxes in that verse.

The pivot of Luke 9

Luke Chapter 9 is a big pivot chapter in how this all plays out; about how the kingdom comes on earth as it is in heaven. Up to this point we’ve seen Jesus arrive on the scene, say a lot about who he is as Son of God; we’ve seen him perform miracles in front of a lot of people – some who were interested and some who thought he was dangerous. If Chapters 1–8 ask, *“Who is Jesus?”* then Chapter 9 asks, *“What does it mean to follow Him?”*

The pivot occurs for us at the start of the chapter which opens with Jesus gathering the Twelve together who he had called to follow him, and he gives them something that only he could give. Chapter 9 Verses 1-2 say, **“He gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.”**

This is wild. Most of them still didn’t fully understand who Jesus was. They had no theological degrees. They had no manual for *“What to do if a demon approaches you at the market.”* All they had was Jesus’ instruction to “go.”

Their response? Verse 6 records it for us, **“So they set out and went from village to village, preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere.”**

I wonder if they felt ready; if they thought they were qualified to do what Jesus asked them to do, if they thought there were others who might be better, who perhaps are more qualified. I wonder if they thought, *“What about our business, what about our KiwiSaver, who’s going to take care of our life admin?”*

Some time goes by leading up to Verse 10, which says, **“When the disciples returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done.”** I also wonder what Jesus was doing while they were

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away – was he making breadboards in his workshop? Was he visiting his mum? It doesn't say, but the next story reiterates the movement that we've seen in that opening section.

The second story is one we know well that in my Bible is titled, “*Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand*” ... with just five loaves of bread and two fish. However, the title is technically incorrect for two big reasons:

- Firstly, Verse 14 says that there were “*about five thousand men*” there, which is just the way people reported things back then; it wasn't the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship meeting, so there were women and kids there also. So, there was probably more like 15,000 people present, and
- Secondly, and most significantly, it wasn't Jesus who did the mahi [work] in this event, because in a captivating short instruction that has more meaning to it than the six words we read, Jesus said to the disciples, “*You give them something to eat.*”

The kingdom involves us

If we combine both initial stories in Luke Chapter 9, we can see the shift, **and it's massive ...** when we pray for the kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven, Jesus invites his followers to carry the mission with Him, empowered by his Spirit. The reason that Jesus is doing this comes a little later in another short hinge verse with significant implications for the entire Gospel that we often breeze over. Verse 51 says, “*As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.*”

Resolute. Determined. Unshakeable. Jerusalem wasn't a holiday destination, as Jesus knows that he's setting his face towards his own death sentence. The Son of God, the Messiah, was putting into practice that **love always moves toward sacrifice.**

If Jesus is who we say and sing he is, and if we are genuinely seeking to become more like Jesus, then Jesus is leading the way by saying that actions speak louder than words. In this section of

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Luke Chapter 9 that concludes at Verse 51, Jesus is passing the baton towards his followers so that they might walk the same path that he is going before them.

Almost exactly halfway through the block we're looking at today, Jesus summarises this pivot, this transition, by giving us the heart of this entire chapter; words so confronting that even today we try to soften them. We read in Verses 23-24, ***“Then he said to them all: ‘If anyone would come after me, they must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it.’”***

Perhaps a more English friendly paraphrase makes these verses more accessible. The late Eugene Peterson writes Jesus' words this way in his book called *The Message*, ***“Then he told them what they could expect for themselves: “Anyone who intends to come with me has to let me lead. You're not in the driver's seat - I am. Don't run from suffering; embrace it. Follow me and I'll show you how. Self-help is no help at all. Self-sacrifice is the way, my way, to finding yourself, your true self.”***

Jesus is saying that the act of activating the kingdom of heaven on earth is through what he is modelling, because, again, **love always moves toward sacrifice**, and that this kind of love is directed by the Spirit of God who is at work in us which often leads us to places that we would not naturally go.

We live in a culture that loves Jesus' compassion but often avoids His call to surrender. If we're honest, many of us prefer a safe, manageable, low-commitment Jesus, but Luke 9 exposes that as a cheap imitation of the real king as he calls us to move from admiration to obedience, from convenience to conviction, from being fans of Jesus to being followers of Jesus. He sends us out to preach the kingdom of God, he tells us to give them something to eat. He says that if we want to see revival in our land, then revival starts with obedience to what he lays in our hearts as he encourages us to be on the path of an ongoing spiritual transformation that puts faith into action.

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The kingdom principle that we see in Luke 9 is that **Jesus doesn't wait until we feel ready, he calls us to trust Him on the road.** Or in an expression that you may have heard before, **Jesus doesn't call the qualified, he qualifies the called.**

I wonder if you've ever sat around waiting for the "perfect moment" to obey Jesus; the perfect time to serve, to go deeper, to give, to lead, to reconcile, to witness, to forgive. And you're waiting for that perfect moment because you still feel underprepared or inadequate. In this chapter where Jesus transitions from being the person of power to sharing his authority, Jesus says, *"Go. Start. Step. Trust Me. I'll meet you on the road."*

This is not gentle religious poetry. This is Jesus saying, *"You cannot follow me and stay in control of your life. You cannot have the kingdom and keep your kingdom. You cannot cling to me with one hand while clinging to comfort, pride, or self-rule with the other."* The summary: **to follow the king, we must surrender our crown.**

Application

The question to ask ourselves is, *"How committed are we to jumping off the rock into the pool of the kingdom of heaven on earth?"* Our commitment is often defined by thinking about our response to what God might be laying on our hearts when it comes to carrying the cross of Christ into situations that are in front of us.

- Maybe it's the cross of **forgiveness**, letting go of a wound you've been feeding for years.
- Maybe it's the cross of **obedience**, stepping into a ministry or conversation or act of generosity that scares you.
- Maybe it's the cross of **repentance**, finally laying down a hidden sin or destructive habit.
- Maybe it's the cross of **courage**, sharing your faith with someone you're afraid will reject you.
- Maybe it's the cross of **humility**, apologising to someone you've hurt.
- Maybe it's the cross of **sacrifice**, giving generously in a way that affects your lifestyle.

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Or maybe the action of this chapter is asking ourselves what comfort or crown Jesus might be asking us to leave behind:

- The comfort of our preferred political views?
- The comfort of our habit of staying silent?
- The comfort of our insistence on being right?
- The comfort of our fear of looking foolish?
- The comfort of our desire to have a safe, small, controllable faith?

The kingdom is not built by comfortable Christians, it's built by surrendered ones, but Jesus doesn't call us to surrender alone, every act of obedience becomes a place He meets us and offers us life in a way that none of our crowns can.

I want to give you a very specific challenge, one that is perhaps becoming the *Windsor Park Challenge*. Before Thursday at 4pm, I want you think about responding to one thing that Jesus is asking of you that costs you something. Just one. It could be:

- A phone call of reconciliation.
- A gift of generosity.
- A risky conversation of love.
- A new ministry step.
- A confession.
- An apology.
- A moment of bold witness.
- A plan to retrain for something that God has wired you for that you're too scared to commit to. Or perhaps
- An act of sacrificial service.

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Take out your phone and type it in a new note. Pray into it. Like the disciples did in Verse 6, take the courage to **“set out”** on the journey of obedience, and then set an alarm for Thursday at 4pm and self-assess your level of commitment to taking the jump. Of course, if Thursday doesn't work for you, pick your own timeline – this is an invitation, not a test.

Worship and obedience are inseparable because authentic worship naturally flows into obedience, and it's in those steps of uncertain faith where the Spirit of God gives us a view of the kingdom that we've perhaps never seen before. And from my own experience, it's exhilarating.

Conclusion

Let's be clear, Jesus is not asking us to do anything he didn't do first. He denied Himself. He carried His cross. He set His face toward Jerusalem, and he embraced the cost - for us. The call to a costly discipleship is not a call to misery. It's a call to true life. It's a call to follow the only king who loves you enough to die for you.

So, Windsor Park, as we continue our *King and Kingdom Come* series, may we be a people who respond to the king with courage, obedience, and surrender.

May we deny ourselves.

May we pick up our cross.

May we follow Him.

As you stand at the edge of our own Bulli Point moment this week, let's not settle for admiring the view. Let's jump. Let's trust him. He'll meet us in the water.

Amen.

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Responsive reading to close

Together

Just as He sent them, Jesus **sends us**.

Not just to observe, but to act.

Not just to admire, but to proclaim.

Not just to follow Him in church, but to carry His kingdom into the streets of Auckland, into our workplaces, our schools, our homes, our neighbourhoods.

Leader:

Go knowing that the One who sends you **has given you everything you need** - His Spirit, His Word, and His presence.

Go courageously, even when the task seems impossible, trusting that Jesus walks with you.

Go humbly, serving others, sharing hope, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom.

And as you go, remember His words: *“Take nothing for the journey—trust in Me. Share what I have given you. Be My witnesses.”*

Together:

So we go; as His disciples, and as His ambassadors.

We go in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – we’re sent to love, we’re sent to serve, we’re sent to make His kingdom known.

Amen.

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Reflecting on Sunday 23rd November 2025:

Last week Kevin McFetridge from Tearfund talked about putting our faith into action (which happens to be one of the key phrases of both Tearfund and Windsor Park! What did that look like for you over the last week?

These questions help you think more about this message. We hope they might be a conduit for conversation and reflection, encouraging us to wrestle with how this message might practically work itself out in our lives.

- 1. “You give them something to eat.”** Where do you sense Jesus inviting *you* (or your group) to step from admiration into participation? What practical “kingdom mahi” might Jesus be placing in front of you?
- 2. Deny yourself, take up your cross, follow.** Which aspect of Jesus’ call in Luke 9:23 is hardest for you at this stage of life - self-denial, daily surrender, or obedient following, and why?
- 3. The comfort or the crown?** What “comfort”, “crown”, or personal control might Jesus be asking you to release? How does holding onto it shape your spiritual growth?
- 4. Thursday at 4pm.** If you chose one courageous act of obedience that would cost you something this week, what would it be? What would help you take that step?

If you’d like to chat with someone about your spiritual journey or anything else going on in your life, please contact us at care@windsorpark.org.nz; **we’re better together** and **no perfect people are allowed.**

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Below are some further resources that may take the message further and deeper and enable you to explore other viewpoints on the same theme. We also encourage you to engage with the preacher if there are further questions you have or if you'd like clarification on anything. Email info@windsorpark.org.nz and we'll direct your query to the appropriate person.

1. **The Cost of Discipleship** by **Dietrich Bonhoeffer** is a classic exploration of what it truly means to follow Jesus when it costs us something. If you haven't read this book, it's worth getting hold of. The easiest place to purchase a copy is from Mighty Ape – click here for a link: <https://www.mightyape.co.nz/mn/buy/mighty-ape-the-cost-of-discipleship-37717128/>
2. This message mentions an aspect of being a follower of Jesus that we often don't take to heart – that of it being a lifelong journey, accepting that we keep growing the longer we live. There are many books and articles about this, but here's an introductory article to get you started called **The Powerful Witness of Long, Ordinary, Obedience** - <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/long-ordinary-obedience/>
3. Over the last few years, we've talked a lot about a discipleship series called **Practising the Way** by **John Mark Comer**, that offers short, practical guides on silence & solitude, simplicity, fasting, community, and mission - ideal for people wanting to take small steps of obedience. If you haven't seen this series, click her for an introductory video, and then just follow your nose! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4QH4Q5DL9UA>