

THE APOSTLES ARE SENT OUT

Luke 9:1-36

There are really four parts to this lesson. We have chosen the sending out of the apostles as the center of our study because we have had a lesson on the feeding of the multitude and one on the transfiguration in our studies of the other Gospels. Both these stories, as well as the Lord's question and Peter's answer can easily be taken up in direct relation to the assigned topic, as examples and types of the Lord's preparation of the apostles for their life work.

Doctrinal Points

Jesus Christ, risen and glorified, is the only God.

Moses and the Prophets teach of Him.

Faith gives the power to help others.

The more we do for others the more we are able to do.

Notes for Parents

Did you ever think of the fact that we are all capable of being apostles of the Lord?

We sometimes hear a person say, "I didn't ask to be born; I can't help being what I am." This is his excuse for not trying to overcome his evils. The first part of his statement is true of every one of us. Under divine providence and without any choice of our own each one of us was born in a particular family, in a particular community, with a particular heredity, and with particular abilities and particular weaknesses.

But the second part of his statement is false. No one remains just what he was at birth, and what he becomes—his final character—depends on his own choice and not on anyone or anything else. Others may put stumbling blocks in his way, but we develop

strength only by overcoming obstacles. Other people may tempt him to do wrong but he, like every person in the world, has an all-powerful friend always at hand to help him do right if he really wants to. We should look at the circumstances of our birth as our own special place and opportunity in the world—the place which no one else can fill. Our few short years of life here are given us just for the purpose of choosing what kind of people we want to be. And the choice is a very important one, for the character we choose for ourselves here is the character we shall keep to eternity.

Out of all His followers the Lord chose twelve men to be His apostles. They were very simple men. At least four of them were fishermen—three of them His closest disciples—and one was a tax collector, despised by his fellow men because of his occupation. But the Lord saw in each of them qualities which were needed for the establishment of His kingdom among men, and because they followed Him wherever He went and did what He told them to do, He could teach them and give them power to teach others and to help others to overcome their evils and weaknesses and mistaken ideas. Our lesson today tells us about some of this teaching and what the apostles were enabled to do. And because the Lord has recorded it for us in His Word, it is for us too, and we can learn to be His apostles in our world of today—if we choose.



Primary

Try to teach the children the number of the apostles, what the words *disciple* and *apostle* mean, and the names of the Lord's three closest followers. The teacher should do as much as possible with the details of the lesson as abridged. This class should also learn the word *transfiguration* and what it means.

As the Lord went about the country and the villages preaching and teaching and working miracles, more and more people believed in Him and followed Him. Many came to Him only to be healed of their diseases. But others came to learn from Him how they ought to live. These were called His disciples, because the word *disciple* means “a learner.”

The Lord knew just what was in the heart and mind of each one of these disciples, just as He always knows what is in the heart and mind of each one of us. From all His disciples He chose twelve men in whom He found certain special qualities which would make them able to go and tell other people the things He came to show them. These were the men who were to go out into the world, after the Lord's life on earth was over, and begin the Christian Church. These twelve were called apostles, because the word *apostle* means "one sent out." See if you can remember the words *disciple* and *apostle* and what they mean.

The Lord gave these men special instructions and also gave them practice in the work they were to do.

When the Lord sent them out, what powers did He give them?

What were they to preach?

What were they to take with them?

How were they to be taken care of?

Three of the apostles were often taken with the Lord when the others were left behind.

Which three were they?

Where did He take them to show them a vision?

What was the appearance of the Lord in the vision?

This vision is called the *transfiguration*, a word which means "change of appearance."

Whom did the apostles see talking with the Lord?

Moses and Elijah represent the Law and the Prophets.

What did Peter want to do?

What overshadowed them which made them afraid?

What did the voice from heaven say?

When the cloud passed, whom did they see?

The apostles were the ones who, after the Lord's earthly life was ended, went out into the world and began the Christian Church.

Junior

The Junior notes this time will give the teacher a suggestion for developing the lesson. In taking up the voice from heaven recall the story of the Lord's baptism and have the class look it up in Luke 3:21-22. Be sure the children know the names Peter, James, and John, and suggest that they learn the full list of the twelve, which will be found in Luke 6:14-16.

What is a miracle?
What did the Lord do for the centurion?
What did He do for the widow of Nain?
What had happened to John the Baptist?
What did John want to know?
What did the Lord tell John's messengers?
What did He say about John?

Naturally the Lord's miracles attracted many people to Him. The greater part of these people came because they wanted to be healed of their physical or mental diseases. The Lord healed those who were humble and believed in His power. But there were many—especially those who had been prepared by John the Baptist—who wanted to be taught by the Lord how to live rightly. They came to Him to learn. They are called His disciples because the word *disciple* means “a learner.” The Lord taught them all they were able to learn. You know that in school some children learn more than others. It is true that some have more mental aptitude than others, but this is only a part of the reason. A very great deal of our ability to learn depends on our desire to learn. A pupil in school whose mind is somewhere else than on the lesson does not learn much, does he? And neither does one who thinks he knows enough already. In the things which the Lord wants to teach us—things about God and heaven, about our souls, and about how to live good and useful lives in this world—the desire to learn is the most important thing in determining how much we learn. The Lord found among His disciples a few men whom He could teach much more than all the rest could be given. So He kept them with Him constantly and let them see and do many things not possible for the others. Look up and read Luke 6:13-16.

How many did the Lord choose?
What did He call them?

The word *apostle* means “one sent out,” and our lesson today tells of the first time the Lord sent out the twelve.

What powers did He give them?
What were they to preach?

What were they not to take with them?

How were they to live?

This was a part of the special preparation the Lord gave His apostles. You know that when we are preparing for any particular work, it is not enough just to be told how it should be done: we have to have practice in doing it. For instance, no one ever learns to play the piano by just being told about music and what the notes are.

Our chapter tells about some other lessons the apostles had. One of these lessons is told in a story which is found also in the Gospel of Mark.

What did the Lord say to them when they asked Him to send the multitude away to buy food?

What food did they have with them?

How many people were to be fed?

What happened after the Lord had blessed the food?

This miracle showed them that the Lord could give them power to meet people's needs, if they looked to Him for it.

Now read verses 7 to 9 and then verses 18 to 20. Even Herod could see that the power Jesus exercised came in some way from God, but only those who followed the Lord closely really understood that He was the Messiah or Christ, God Himself come into the world. And only three of the apostles could be given the wonderful vision with which our lesson closes. It makes a great difference what we believe about Christ. *Christ* means "anointed." The Hebrew word is *Messiah*. The Old Testament had said that in the fullness of time Jehovah Himself would come into the world in a human form which was to be called "the anointed one" and "the Son of God." In the Gospel of Mark Peter's answer is, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." They both mean the same, the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies, Jehovah in the flesh. Because Peter and James and John believed this, the Lord could open their spiritual eyes to see Him in His glory, as they would see Him in the spiritual world when they went there.

Where did they go for this vision?

How did the Lord look?

Who were seen with Him?
What did Peter want to do?
What overshadowed them which frightened them?
What did the voice from heaven say?
Whom did they see when the cloud had passed?

This vision is called the *transfiguration*, a word meaning “a change of appearance.” In the vision, Moses represented the Law and Elijah the Prophets. In another place (Luke 24:27, 44) after His resurrection, the Lord told His disciples that Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms all taught of Him. So at the end of this vision in our lesson Moses and Elijah disappeared, and the disciples saw only the Lord. This is what happens in our minds when we truly believe that Jesus is God Himself. We read the Old Testament and find Him in it just the same as in the Gospels.

Intermediate

The correspondence of the twelve apostles as a whole and of Peter, James, and John in particular may be used as the beginning and basis of the lesson with this class. The thought that the Lord knows what is in each one of us and will teach and lead and support us all through our lives if we look to Him instead of to ourselves for guidance is one which young people should be given as early as possible.

The Lord chose twelve of His closest disciples to be His apostles, the men whom He would send out into the world to preach the Gospel, the good news of salvation. There were twelve apostles, as there were twelve tribes of Israel, because the number twelve signifies “all truths and goods in the complex,” which means all that we can know and feel if we are trying to serve the Lord and the neighbor. The Lord, who knows the heart and mind of each one of us, saw in each of these twelve men particular characteristics which could serve in the establishment of the Christian Church. So He kept them with Him, and gave them special instruction and special experiences.

One of these experiences was practice in the work they would be doing after He left them. As our chapter tells us, He “gave them

power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. And he sent them forth to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick.” Mark tells us that they were sent out “by two and two.” They were to provide nothing for their journey—not even money—but were to go about finding their food and lodging with people who were willing to receive them. This would keep them in the feeling that they were not going out in their own strength but were being led and cared for by the Lord. We all need this knowledge. And we learn from it, too, that even if we are sure we are right, we should not try to force ourselves or our ideas on people who do not want what we have to give.

In our study of the Gospel of Mark we had a lesson on the feeding of the multitude, the only one of the Lord’s miracles which is recorded in all four Gospels. You will remember that this miracle taught the apostles—as it teaches us—that if one makes the effort to share with others the good and truth he has, however little it may be, first seeking the Lord’s blessing upon it, the Lord will multiply it so that it will meet the need and more.

Now let us think about the rest of our assignment, which shows us still another kind of preparation given to the apostles. It makes a difference what we believe about God, both in this world and in the next. If we say we believe in God but refuse to accept any definite teaching about Him, we are thrown back on our own judgment and that of our community for our standards of right and wrong. We are not led by the Lord but by ourselves and the world. “God is not in all our thoughts” (Psalm 10:4).

That is why, in all three Gospels in which the incident of the transfiguration is recorded, it is immediately preceded by the account of the Lord’s question to His disciples and Peter’s answer. It is the recognition of the Lord as God come into the world which opens the mind to a true understanding of the Scriptures.

Look up and read Isaiah 9:6. This prophecy shows just how our thought about the Lord should rise, from dwelling on His life in this world—the child, and the son—by steps until we acknowledge Him as our heavenly Father from whom alone can come happiness

and peace. Jesus told the woman of Samaria plainly that He was the promised Messiah (John 4:25-26). If we believe Him, we too see Him transfigured. His words are God's words, not only when He is saying tender, comforting things, but when He is pointing out and rebuking our sins. He speaks to us through the letter of the Word just as really as He spoke to Peter, James, and John.

Peter, James, and John, the three apostles who were the Lord's closest followers, represent faith, charity, and the works of charity. It is these three things in us which are able, if we accept the Lord as God, to follow Him up to the mountain—into a state of spiritual perception—and see Him transfigured. Luke says, “The fashion of his countenance was altered”; Matthew, “His face did shine as the sun.” All three Gospels speak of the shining whiteness of His garments. The face is the symbol of the interior quality of a person. When we recognize the Lord as God Himself, we see that the love He manifested in His every word and act is the very nature of God; so His face shone as the sun. And the letter of the Word—His raiment—becomes suddenly clear to us and is freed from the apparent difficulties which marred it before. It shines with the light from within.

Peter's first confused thought was to give equal worship to Moses, Elijah, and Jesus; that is, to hold his old faith, and add the new “Christian” one. But when he made his proposal, the cloud—symbol of the darkness of his mind—overshadowed him, the voice was heard, and when the cloud lifted, the Lord “was found alone.” Look up and read verses 16 to 18 of the first chapter of the second epistle of Peter, in which he speaks of this vision. The three apostles also learned from this experience that the Lord's coming was for all men, not just for the Jews of that day, although Peter later had to have another vision to remind him (Acts 11:1-17).

Basic Correspondences

twelve = all truths and goods in the complex

Peter = faith

James = charity

John = the works of charity
Moses = the law or the historical Word
Elias (Elijah) = the prophetic Word
the face = the interior quality of a person

Senior

Try to present this assignment throughout as instruction to us for our guidance in trying to serve as apostles of the Lord. Most of our young people start out in life with a genuine desire to make their lives count for the betterment of the world. If they will keep the lessons of this chapter in their minds, they will avoid many pitfalls, and will grow in ability and in spiritual effectiveness.

The word *apostle* means “one sent out.” Each of us should be an apostle of the Lord. Our lives are given us by the Lord for a spiritual purpose—that we may develop the kingdom of heaven within us and help to develop it in the world about us. So when we read the story of the sending out of the twelve apostles, we may know that all the details of it as it is told in the Word apply to us also as apostles of the Lord. The Lord knows what is in each one of us, just as He knew what was in each one of His followers when He was in the world. He shows us in this chapter the spirit in which we should live our lives, the power He is able to give us, the conviction we should have about Him, and the vision it is possible for us to attain.

First He gave the apostles “power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases.” If we look to Him, we shall be given power to conquer our evil tendencies and to correct our faults and weaknesses.

Then He gave them their mission: “to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick.” Our business in life is to promote the kingdom of God in every possible way, and to help others to spiritual health.

Then He told them to take with them no provision of their own for their support while they were doing His work. This is a very important instruction for all of us. We tend naturally to be looking

at ourselves in all that we do, thinking of our own abilities and of the impression we are making on others. But our message is not our own, and neither is the power which can make it helpful to others. Self-forgetfulness is essential if we are to be channels for the Lord's spirit.

“And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart.” This means that when we find a willing reception in our efforts to do good, we should “stay with it” until our work is completed. Too often we do some small service or bring some bit of truth to a person who needs and welcomes it, and then do not follow through. Some other interest catches our attention, or some little difference of opinion or manner of life turns us away. On the other hand, we are warned not to try to force entrance where we are not wanted, and also to “shake off the very dust” of such an experience from our feet after it is over. We must not dwell on the thought of those who have been unwilling to hear what we have to say. Such thoughts, remaining in our minds, cloud our zeal and discourage us from other efforts. They are like the dust which adhered to the apostles' feet.

After the apostles returned to the Lord from their “practice teaching,” He gave them another experience to drive home the lessons they had learned. We may recall that the feeding of the five thousand with the five loaves and two fishes pictures the power of the Lord to multiply our small supply of knowledge and ability as we try to use it in His name in the service of the neighbor.

Then in our chapter we come to the basic lesson to be learned. As an introduction to our thought suppose we read the following passages in order: Isaiah 9:6, Matthew 1:21-23, Luke 4:17-21, John 4:25-26 and 14:8-9. Many within the Christian Church have allowed themselves to draw unwarranted conclusions from the mere words “son of God,” when a little study of the passages in which the term is used would show that even in the letter the “son of God” merely means God in human form, Immanuel, “God with us.” This is the obvious meaning in the Old Testament prophecies, and the claim which Jesus clearly made for Himself. This is what

those who had the Scriptures expected the Messiah to be. Read John 10:32-33.

When the people refused to accept Jesus as the Messiah it was only because they did not want that kind of God. And that is the real reason today why people refuse to accept Him as God. They prefer to think of Him as a man, a man who said many inspired things perhaps, but with whom they are free to differ when what He says does not suit them.

The thought that Christ is not God Himself closes the door of the mind against light from heaven as it comes to us through the letter of the Word. Because Peter, James, and John believed Jesus to be the Messiah, their spiritual eyes could be opened to see Him transfigured. So our eyes can be opened to see Him in the inner meaning of the Word. Many years later John saw Him again in a still fuller vision. Read Revelation 1:12-18.

Swedenborg tells us that our ability to see the Lord when we come into the spiritual world is measured by the understanding of Him which we have gained in this world. If we have not thought of God as a person, Jesus Christ, we shall never see Him “face to face,” but shall be conscious of Him only as a diffused light, even though after death we accept the fact that Jesus is God from our angel instructors as everyone must who enters the heavens; there will be no established basis in our minds for seeing Him as a person.

The lesson of the Lord’s question to His disciples concerns us. He asks the same question of us today, and upon our answer depends our ability to see Him transfigured and to find Him in all the Scriptures, to see Moses and Elijah—the Law and the Prophets—as teaching of Him. On our answer also depends our ability to be led by Him and to receive His spirit. Our thought of Him today should be led upward by gradual degrees through the study of the Law, the Prophets, and the Gospels in the light of their inner meaning, until the cloud is lifted and He stands alone as the only object of our worship.



Adult

It is suggested that the outline of the assignment as a whole and its meaning be covered first as briefly as possible by the teacher, and the rest of the time given to any one phase which may appeal to the class. There are many very practical discussion points.

As we take up the story of the Lord's life in this course in each of the different Gospels in turn, we come to the same familiar incidents, as the feeding of the five thousand and the transfiguration. The story in general is the same; yet there are significant variations in context. Isn't this true of the way in which familiar passages from the Word come up in our own minds? The Lord brings them to us in their application to different states and different experiences as we go through life. So today we are thinking of these two familiar stories as a part of the preparation of the apostles for their great life work, and consequently as part of our preparation for true apostleship. The Lord says to all of us: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bear much fruit, and that your fruit should remain." We all want to be true apostles. We want our lives and words to bear testimony to our belief and to lead to lasting good. In this chapter from Luke we are given particular guidance for this task.

This sending out of the apostles was in the nature of a practical experience. They went out as directed and then came back and reported to their teacher. They were given certain powers, which we recognize as the ability the Lord gives each of us to overcome evils in himself and to help others to correct their weaknesses. They were given their mission: "to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick," as we are to "show forth not only with our lips, but in our lives" the power of the Lord to heal and bless. They were to take nothing of their own with them, but to trust to the Lord that they would be received and provided for. We need this instruction especially, because we are all so prone to self-confidence and self-assertion that our ego often looms up between the Lord's message and the people to whom we are trying to bring it. We are to tarry with those who welcome what we have to bring

them; and when our efforts are not well received, we are to withdraw and not to let thoughts of the disappointing experience—the dust of the city—cling to us. You will find it interesting to go over the petitions of the Lord's Prayer which we say each morning as we begin our day, and see how fully they express our desire to follow these same instructions. Then at night, when we look back over the experiences of the day, we shall not be ashamed to tell the Lord, as the returning apostles did, all we have done. And the Lord will give us the further instruction we need.

In Luke this further instruction first takes the form of the one miracle which is recorded in all four Gospels, and which we have studied in the Gospel of Mark. We so often feel inadequate in the face of an opportunity or obligation to give needed spiritual food to our neighbors or to our children. How shall I explain New Church teachings to my friends? How shall I answer my children's questions? Our impulse is to send them to others for the answers, as the apostles asked the Lord to send the multitude away into the villages to buy food. But the Lord says to us as to the apostles: "Give ye them to eat." However small our store of knowledge and experience, we have something to give, and we shall always find that as we try to give it, looking to the Lord for blessing, He will multiply it so that it will more than meet the need. And as we study the Word with the help which the Lord has provided for us in the writings, we shall become better and better able to serve as the Lord's apostles. Swedenborg tells us that influx is into our knowledges (AC 4096).

Then in our chapter we come to a different type of instruction. The story of the transfiguration is given in three Gospels. (The other accounts are in Matthew 17:1-9 and Mark 9:2-10.) In all three cases it is directly preceded by the story of the Lord's question and Peter's answer, the prophecy of the crucifixion and resurrection, and the teaching that whosoever will save his life shall lose it. First comes the necessity of recognizing the Lord as God, then the understanding of how He laid down His life for our salvation, then the recognition of the fact that we must lay down our self

life if we are to be conjoined to Him, and finally the ability to see Him in His glorified humanity and to understand in the letter of the Word the teaching concerning Him.

AE 64² states the correspondence of the story of the transfiguration more clearly and more briefly than any paraphrase could possibly do: “The Lord took Peter, James, and John, because by them the church in respect to faith, charity, and the works of charity was represented; He took them ‘into a high mountain’ because ‘mountain’ signifies heaven; ‘His face did shine as the sun’ (Matthew 17:2) because ‘face’ signifies the interiors, and it did shine as the sun because His interiors were Divine, for the ‘sun’ is Divine love; ‘His garments became white as the light’ because ‘garments’ signify Divine truth proceeding from Him; the like is signified by ‘light’. ‘Moses’ and ‘Elijah’ appeared, because the two signify the Word, ‘Moses’ the historical Word, and ‘Elijah’ the prophetic Word; ‘a bright cloud overshadowed them’ because ‘a bright cloud’ signifies the Word in the letter within which is the internal sense; ‘a voice out of the cloud said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him,’ because ‘a voice out of a cloud’ signifies Divine truth out of the Word, and ‘beloved Son’ the Lord’s Divine Human. And because Divine truth is from Him, and thence all truth of the church, it was said out of the cloud ‘in whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him.’” See here the passage from AC 5922⁵ below. See also AE 195¹⁸, AC 2576¹⁹, and in AC the preface to Genesis 18.

In the story of the transfiguration, after the cloud passed they saw Jesus only. When we, through belief in the Lord as God with us and faithfulness to His teachings, have been led up into the mountain of spiritual vision where we can see Him in His glory as the internal sense of the Word reveals Him, we come to recognize the Lord alone as God and as the whole of the Word. The three apostles could not share this vision with others “in those days.” Such a vision is the crown of faithful service. It cannot be shared with those who have not prepared themselves to see it. The actual Second Coming of the Lord was a revelation of the internal sense

of the Word, and the transfiguration is thus a prophecy of the understanding of the Lord made possible by His Second Coming.

From the Writings of Swedenborg

Apocalypse Explained, n. 821²: “The twelve apostles, like the twelve tribes of Israel, represented the church in the whole complex, or all things of truth and good, or all things of faith and charity; likewise . . . Peter, James, and John, signified faith, charity, and the works of charity, in their order; from which it follows that when they were together they represented these as one. It is said as one, because without charity there is no faith that is faith; and without works there is no charity that is charity.”

Arcana Coelestia, n. 5922⁵: “In Luke, when Jesus was transfigured on the mountain . . . the Lord showed Peter, James, and John His Divine Human, such as it was and appeared in Divine light; and the form in which He was then seen presented to view the Word such as it is in the internal sense, thus such as is the Divine truth in heaven, for the Word is Divine truth for the use of the church. For this reason it was also presented to view at the same time that Moses and Elias talked with Him, for by Moses is represented the Law . . . and by Elias . . . the Prophets.”

Suggested Questions on the Lesson

- J. What did the centurion ask of the Lord? *to heal his servant*
- J. What did the Lord say about the centurion? *he had great faith*
- P. What did the Lord do for the widow of Nain? *restored son*
- J. What had happened to John the Baptist? *put in prison*
- J. What did the messengers from John ask the Lord? *are you Christ?*
- J. What did the Lord tell them? *tell John what you've seen*
- J. What did He tell the people about John? *great prophet*
- P. How many apostles were there? *twelve*
- P. When the Lord sent them out, what powers did He give them? *over devils, to heal*
- J. What were they to preach? *kingdom of God*
- P. What were they to do? *preach and heal in all cities*
- P. What were they not to take with them? *no “extras”*
- P. Where were they to stay? *in people's homes*
- J. What were they to do if they were not received? *shake off dust*
- J. What miracle is part of our lesson? *feeding five thousand*

- J. What did it teach the apostles? *Lord's power to meet needs*
- I. What did Peter believe about the Lord? *the Christ of God*
- P. What three apostles were closest to the Lord? *Peter, James, John*
- P. What vision were they allowed to see? *Lord dazzling white*
- P. Who were seen talking with the Lord in the vision? *Moses, Elijah*
- J. What is this vision called? *transfiguration*
- I. To what does the number twelve correspond? *all good and truth in complex, all we can know and feel if we are trying to serve God and neighbor*
- S. Why could only Peter, James, and John see the transfiguration? *they believed He was the Christ*
- S. What do we learn from the Lord's instruction to His apostles about those who would and those who would not receive them? *we should share freely with those who accept, but not try to force belief*