

09/21/25 - Luke 9:37-50 - "Windows that Reflect the Heart"

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[0 : 00] Please turn with me to the Gospel of Luke 9, 37-50. Jesus answered, Jesus said to his disciples,

And said to them, Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. For he who is least among you all is one who is great.

John answered, Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him because he does not follow us. But Jesus said to him, Do not stop him, for the one who is not against you is for you.

This is God's word. Thanks be to God. Now, it's great to be in such a passage. That passage is action-packed, isn't it?

A lot that goes on, it's like, bam, bam, bam. And so, it's difficult. And it does have a lot of action, but I hope that we'll be able to break this down and kind of slow down a little bit at its parts that are separated here.

[2 : 28] There are few figures in church history that I think have been known for being so honest about the human soul and the condition of the human soul than Augustine of Hippo.

He was the bishop in North Africa long ago, and he was the most influential church father. I know that's a statement, but he influenced not only Protestant religion, but also Catholic religion.

You know the great names, John Calvin and Martin Luther. Well, they were influenced by Augustine of Hippo. And so, not only was he like theologically deep, like he has some theological depth to his writings and everything like that, and his brilliance that came out from his reflections, but he was really, really well known for his honesty.

Probably, he was more honest than I could be honest, if I want to be honest, right? He's remembered for his honesty. In his famous work, if you don't have this on your bookshelf, I feel like a book supplier these last couple sermons.

If you don't have Augustine's Confessions on your bookshelf, I give you permission on your Amazon, put it in your cart, and we're going to sell them out, okay?

[3 : 51] It is a great read and resource for us as we're navigating sinfulness in our lives that we just don't want, and we feel isolated with our sin.

And Augustine just is full disclosure. I am wretched. He's so honest. It's wonderful. And so, in his famous work, Confessions, it's the first ever spiritual autobiography to be ever written.

And he pulls back the curtain throughout his book entirely to his soul. You see inside where nobody wants to see.

And in book 10 specifically, that's in Confessions, after tracing his journey from sin to Christ, kind of thinking about his Christian beliefs and salvation in Christ, he started reflecting upon his journey from sin to Christ.

And he admits that even as a Christian, he was deeply unsettled by what he saw within himself. And he wrote in book 10, I became a problem to myself.

[5 : 13] This is important. Because as Augustine reflected, we'll say through a window of God's word of his journey from sin to Christ, as he reflected looking outward to the gospel, He found himself actually peering from the window reflecting into his own soul.

So he didn't see just grace, like I'm a sinner saved by grace. I'm all messed up and everything. Onward with my day. No, he wrestled with his sin. And it was a consequence of looking at the gospel.

He didn't just see grace. He saw lingering pride. He saw disordered loves, misplaced affections, and he saw idols. He had desires that he saw that combated the Spirit of God working in his life. But I don't think that's just Augustine's story. I think that's our story as well. I think every struggle, if we want to be honest and actually be open about our struggles, as Augustine was, I believe that we could probably see that we wrestle the same way that he wrestled.

The more we study Scripture, the more we just see our pitiful reflection back. We see grace. Augustine saw grace.

[7 : 02] But we see this reflection of a disconnect. I want you to think about this window. Have you ever stared out a window and noticed that during the day, you can see everything outside?

And then the difference between when everything's bright and shiny and it starts getting dark. You can't really see outside anymore, but you see yourself standing there looking out the window.

You can't see anything. In daylight, you see everything outside. When it gets dark, the window sort of changes to a mirror. Instead of showing you the world out there, it reflects the world within.

The window that once revealed outward realities suddenly exposes inward ones. You see yourself. And this is exactly what the window of God's Word does for us as Christians.

It reflects light on our lives. And in that reflection, we suddenly realize and we see the things that we would rather ignore.

[8 : 17] Our unbelief. Our pride. Our misplaced affections and idols. Well, there's good news for us today.

Because in Luke 9, that's exactly what happens to the disciples. Quite a contrast between this transfiguration that we saw last week, and now what in the world has happened.

We should sense that contrast to go from such a wonderful, bright experience to all of a sudden darkness, and then all of a sudden the disciples, their sins are captivating them, especially in unbelief.

And as the darkness deepens, the window reflects something else. It is their unbelief. It is their pride. And we see this happen in the disciples' life.

The window of Scripture doesn't just show us the world as it is. It reflects our soul. It reflects us. And so Luke gives us three windows.

[9 : 29] I'm going to run with that predominant illustration throughout this text. And you've heard about a three-point preacher. I'm a three-window preacher today.

All right? Look at that creativity. You can... I'm not going to say it. Okay. I was going to say the tip culture. You know how everybody gives you the tip thing, you know, for everything.

You know, forget it. Forget about it. So Luke gives us three windows into the same truth and that same reality. And that reality that we'll see unfold for us in a main point is that following Jesus un.masks what is hidden in our hearts and calls us to faith and humility.

And so the sermon title today... Oh boy, I don't even have my clicker out. Don't tip me yet. Put the sermon title up. It's called Windows That Reflect the Heart.

And there will be three windows we will look at today. And not only that, there's going to be three window lessons, I'm going to call them, as the disciples are staring out their window.

[10 : 48] I'd like to invite you to pray with me as we get into this text and as an act of faith that in order for God to speak today, it has to be through His Word and by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Pentecostals say that Baptists don't believe in the Holy Spirit. That's baloney. We do. And we depend on the Holy Spirit utterly, pitifully dependent upon the Holy Spirit.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Father, help us today to understand this experience within the disciples' life and how their experience is not far from our own.

Help us to expose our sin, expose our pride, and expose our misplaced affections and idols today so that we can be enabled and compelled to turn, crucify our flesh.

That it's no longer us who live, but Christ who lives in us. Help us today, Lord, by the power of your Holy Spirit to hear from you today.

[12 : 15] We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Okay, I got my clicker now. The first window lesson is that following Jesus un.masks our weakness of faith.

And we're going to see that from verse 37 to 42. So let's take that chunk of text together and look at this window lesson.

So, coming down from the mountain of glory, this often brings us face to face with the valleys that expose our unbelief.

This is captured in this very quick six-verse episode. The disciples had just seen the majesty of Jesus Christ at the Mount of Transfiguration last week in verse 28 all the way to 36.

These disciples literally tasted the glory of God in this cloud. So vividly bright.

[13:32] There was no doubt there. He tasted it in the clouds. But now, you should see something important within just a verse.

It's like, what in the world is going on in the world? In this valley, their weakness is laid bare for all to see in verse 37.

And I think it's important for us to notice if we compare their journey down from the mountain of transfiguration with the gospel of Mark's account, you might say, Luke really sold us short.

He's given us this expedited trip down the mountain. He missed this thing that Jesus said and this and that and that. So, we have to ask Luke, the author of the gospel of Luke, what are you trying to do here, Luke?

What are you trying to teach us that you would cut all of these details out and move right from the mountain down to this chaotic valley of somebody foaming at the mouth?

[14:43] This is odd, isn't it? There's emphasis in that. Luke's motivation, Luke's intention of writing was not Mark's.

We are in our luxury to flatten out the gospels as if it's some chronological biography of history. There's emphasis and a prerogative that Luke has that was different from Mark's.

And so, we must ask, what might that emphasis be? It has to be church. It has to be a contrast. He wants us to see this vast difference from the mountain of transfiguration to this valley of chaos.

And we need to see that today. In verse 38, we see a desperate father. He pushes us, pushes his way, sorry, through the crowd.

And his son is in trouble. His voice breaks through. Teacher, I beg you, look at my son.

[15:50] For he is my only child. This is a horrifying picture of a helpless father begging for Jesus to help him.

We see in verse 38, And behold, a man came through and behold, a spirit. He says a spirit seizes his son.

And that spirit suddenly cries out. It convulses him so that he foams at the mouth and shatters him and will hardly leave.

And I begged your disciples to cast it out. But they could not. Just a few verses before this, they were at this glorious, dazzling display of Jesus Christ on the mountain.

And now you have powerless disciples. You could almost hear this man's desperation.

[17:09] I begged for the disciples to cast them out, but they could not. We get some tension here. These were the disciples. Yeah, three went up, but there were still nine that remained on earth.

With the people. These men who were once empowered to heal and drive out demons from verse 1 of chapter 9.

Now they stand powerless in the face of such evil. They're helpless and exposed.

Exposed by the ones that needed help the most. Jesus, you can hear his laments.

He laments here. This is as horrifying of a picture of the scene that you could imagine. I don't know. I've seen some horror movies, unfortunately, in my day.

[18:12] And I have a photographic memory. And what's appearing up here, I can't even explain. But foaming at the mouth, convulsing, like this is serious, satanic stuff, right?

Jesus laments. It cuts the air. He says, Oh, faithless. Faithless. And twisted generation.

How long am I to be with you and bear with you? In verse 41. This is far from a momentary rebuke of the disciples.

This is a deliberate echo and placement of their unbelief into biblical history of a problem that is as old as the Bible.

Where you could find this lament in the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32, where Israel's unbelief twisted their hearts away from God.

[19:28] So, contextually, this is pretty significant. You might ask, well, why couldn't they heal him? Faithless.

Twisted generation. That's why. Maybe the author of Ecclesiastes was up to something. He said, there's nothing new under the sun. It's certainly true.

You see, unbelief is not passive doubt. Unbelief is not passive doubt. It's unbelief is spiritual paralysis. When our faith is tested and instead of leaning upon prayerful dependence for God to

work, we lean on our own strength, our own power, our own solutions, our own ways. We cower down and bow literally to the idol of unbelief when we're faced with such things. How often, if we want to get like Augustine, be real, how often do we do the same? It could be something as far as not getting a certain job. You're really hoping your life could be a whole lot easier if you could just get this job. And all of a sudden, it just doesn't work out. [20 : 47] It could be something small like that. Or your life could actually be on the line. The doctor gives you the medical results back and it's not good news. The path ahead is going to be very challenging and very uncertain of what's to come.

Whether it's a small job or your health is on the line, we find ourselves doing the same. We've seen God answer prayers before in all these things.

We go on our bookshelf and we open up our prayer journals and we see him work then. But then when we face these new trials, these new tribulations, new hardships, we rely on yesterday's grace instead of today's God.

God. It's important to know, church, that's not weakness. That's not passive doubt.

That's unbelief in God. These moments require action, church. Prayerful action.

[22 : 02] Submission to God. Action. Begging for faith to be granted because you're struggling in your faith. Like Augustine confesses, God help me in my unbelief.

The disciples miss it. May we learn this window lesson. That following Jesus unmasks our weakness of faith.

Let's do something about this. Not only that, we have a second window lesson. And we see in verse 43 to 45 that following Jesus unmasks our failure to grasp the cross.

This is kind of, that's kind of like an odd statement. But I think as we unpack this section, you'll understand that it's not odd at all. In verse 43, after Jesus heals the boy, amazement fills the crowd. Light. Hope. Jesus is number one. You get the number one finger out. Right? They're happy. It's the transfiguration on earth.

[23 : 20] Everything's good. But Jesus won't let their wonder distract the disciples. He shifts from the focus from this dazzling power found in Christ to a cruciform humility.

And in verse 44, he says, essentially, don't listen to that. Let these words sink into your ears.

That's what it says in your Bible. Did you catch that? There's so much parental tone in that. I swear I say that to my kids once a day. Maybe twice.

Or three times. Let these words sink into your ears. Or if you want to put it simply, listen carefully. Not to that, but to me. Jesus says, the Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men. All them cheering.

[24 : 31] It's going to be by the hands of them that I'm going to die. By the means of the majesty of God is the road to humility.

Man. Man. The disciples can't grasp that majesty must be revealed through suffering.

They were afraid to ask in verse 45. I couldn't blame them. After, I mean, I've heard, let these words sink into your ear from my own mom. And yeah, I'm probably not going to say much after that.

Or else I'll get that wooden spoon. With the holes. The kids today don't know. Somebody back there is like, wooden?

Yeah. We won't go into child abuse. But they were afraid to ask, Jesus, what's going on here? But maybe perhaps they didn't ask because they knew that following Jesus Christ is ultimately going to lead to their very own suffering as well.

[25 : 44] The reality of the gospel is such a paradox. Isn't it? Glory, majesty will come, not through signs and wonders, but through suffering.

Now, wait a minute. Even the train driver is mad about that. Do you hear that? It says, amen. The paradox.

Glory will not come through signs and wonders. Glory comes through suffering. Glory without suffering is no glory at all.

Christianity, void of suffering, is not Christianity. Christianity. It's a fantasy. It's a fantasy.

It's a fantasy land, just like social media is. Pretend little space where people communicate how we were never intended to communicate.

[27 : 00] made up. It's a fantasy. Glory is not just seen in dazzling power, but in cruciform humility.

The Son of Man will be betrayed. He will be mocked. He will be crucified. And through the suffering, God's glory will shine.

And we saw the consequence of that last week. It will be the path of anyone who follows Jesus Christ. It will not be an easy road to a world that hates Jesus Christ. Isn't this where we stumble too? Failure to grasp the cross. We crave the spectacular stuff. We love the easy stuff.

We love easy Christianity. It's good. It's appealing. You want to win the world over? Make it really spectacular. Don't tell them that they have to die to their way of life and repent of their sin.

[28 : 11] That's not going to win anyone over. Or will it? Is that the truth that the broken and sinful world actually needs to hear?

That apart from Jesus, they are lost. Utterly, hopelessly lost. And while Christianity becomes suffering also through belief in Jesus Christ and having faith in Him and picking up your cross, it will be challenging to a hateful and sinful world.

But you will be forgiven. You are not an ultimate citizen on this earth. You are an exile on this earth for a kingdom to come. Your citizenship is in heaven the moment you place your faith in Jesus. True faith is in the cross. True faith isn't dazzled in miracles. It's anchored in the cross. Do you find your faith anchored there in the cross?

Or are you still searching for something shinier, more appealing, a little more exciting, maybe prosperity or health and wealth and material blessings, living the good old life?

[29 : 36] That's not biblical. That's heretical. Those who don't believe, friend, what are you anchoring your life in?

If you're not in Christ today, it has to be worldly things or some made-up religion that sounds good and makes you feel good. Might be success, relationships that you anchor yourself in or money or control.

All of that will break loose the minute that troubles come, trials come, storms in life come. It will all break down.

Nothing along those lines can hold. The cross of Christ is the only anchor strong enough to hold you through life, through this life and through the life to come.

Only in Christ. Without Him, your shift isn't just drifting in this life. You might be like, yeah, I'm a little bit broken. I might be drifting a little bit. No, you are sinking apart from Jesus Christ.

[30 : 47] You are sinking, friend. Come to faith in Jesus Christ. The cost of following Him, yes, that's real. But the cost of rejecting Him is eternal.

may we see this window and allow it to reflect our own propensity to reject the cross.

Even oddly enough, as we're following Jesus, we reject the cross. Lastly, we see another window lesson. Following Jesus unmasks our prideful ambitions.

And so, as if to prove how blind they still are, this scripture is not appealing to the disciples at all. They're on full display here and for good reason. The disciples turn from the cross to this issue with each other and then with other believers.

[31 : 55] So, here we get them arguing with each other and then arguing about other believers. And so, just after a failed exorcism, in verse 40 and 41, the disciples begin to argue.

And it's not about their strengths, how to strengthen their faith and their unbelief. They see that there's some issues going on inside their ticker that they're like, yeah, you should probably have a little bit more faith.

They're not arguing about that. They're not talking about how to support one another in this journey. But they're talking about which one of them is greatest.

Which one of these disciples are the greatest in verse 46? What? In this culture, greatness was often measured by status, by power, but especially proximity to important people.

I mean, they're going around like, I'm with Jesus. How about that? Put on their million-dollar smile and they're with the guy.

[33 : 14] With him. To them, Jesus was their ultimate connection. And some of them had even been closer to Jesus, especially the three that went up to the mount.

Peter, James, and John. Now, I just want you to picture this. I hate when grown men act like children. Grown men, rough guys, fishermen, calloused hands.

And then some not callous tax collectors, you know, the paper pusher guys. Bickering like children on a playground.

The world is happening. This is like a reverse exodus. This is like the book of Judges. There arose a generation who did not know the Lord.

This is it. Voices are rising, accusations are flying, flying, and in the middle of this ugly debate in verse 47, Jesus is just like, probably checked out and like, what do I got to do?

[34 : 25] Oh, I got it. They need an illustration. Jesus in verse 48 calls over a child and sets a child by his side.

And it says, whoever receives this child in my name receives me. And whoever receives me, or I'm sorry, receives him who sent me.

So there's a dual reception here that truly is, that truly states that there's no other way to God than through Jesus Christ, right?

The way, the truth, and the life. Nobody gets to the Father except through him. So that's true here. He makes it clear. And so whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me.

For, injunction, for, he who is least among you, among you all is the one who is great.

[35 : 31] this child standing there is probably like, feels like, what are you saying about me, Jesus? But it's real.

These, these disciples, these grown men are acting like children. But even children deserve more honor than what's going on with them and their words.

This is an upside-down kingdom kingdom, where it's not about proximity that gives you status, that gives you importance and power.

It's not proximity to the greatest, being with the guy, but actually proximity with being with the least. Upside-down kingdom. The greatest follower is the one who is in proximity with the least.

Christ. What a great heart check for anybody in leadership. Anyone desiring leadership who's still unwilling to scrub a toilet.

[36 : 36] What a heart check. Not only that, in verse 49, you want to talk about power of looking through the window.

well, John shows us as he protests, not about the bickering infighting here, but outside them.

There's other guys out there casting demons out in verse 49, which exposes the disciples' need to understand that the kingdom that Jesus is preaching is greater than whatever they are conjuring up between the twelve of them, and their little group, and their little clique, and their little tribe.

The true enemy is not other servants, it's Satan. It always has been. And this infighting is so corrupting to the church.

In this window, the disciples realize pride narrows down this kingdom, this massive kingdom, and this great, vast kingdom that Jesus brought, and it brings it down, like, honey, I shrunk the kids, down to our size.

That makes sense to us, that looks good, that accomplishes really good things. And Jesus calls them to open their hearts wider than their egos.

[38 : 19] It makes us think about, like, what comparisons leech onto our hearts. Comparing our families to other families, comparing our ministry to other ministries, maybe our church to some other church, maybe your theology, or positions to others, and you feel this exclusive narrowing of the kingdom down to your people.

Maybe it's narrowing the kingdom down to your size, your style, and just your circle. Tribalism, which that is, tribalism is antithetical to the kingdom and mission of God.

Tribalism is toxic to the kingdom of God because underneath this tribal attitude that you guys are the people and no one else is the biggest exposure of pride.

Biggest exposure of pride. It wasn't too long ago that there were Christians reading through a book together, and there's no perfect book, there's no perfect author, right?

And these Christians spent more time nitpicking a book that they're reading through rather than taking the good portions that a Christian author, even though the Christian author isn't probably like the clearest in some of his gospel understanding, but he believes in Jesus, he's going to be in heaven, and I'm sorry, there's not going to be a fence between those guys who are critiquing his book and the guys that follow the authorship of his book.

[40 : 15] You understand that this is where we are at in Christianity, it's toxic. Tribalism is antithetical to the mission of God because underneath tribalism is this deep-rooted pride that the kingdom of God is your way or the highway.

Where theology, doctrine, you add on to theology and doctrine, and all of a sudden we're walking around like Pharisees, building our barriers around the gospel to protect the gospel.

That is exactly what the Pharisees did. Pride shrinks God's work down to our dimensions and when Jesus Christ is calling for us to open it wide to his.

These are three windows, church. Three windows, three window lessons. One of unbelief, one of a failure to grasp the cross, one of pride.

And each one reflects not just the disciples, but through the power of God's word, looking through the darkness of the text, there we are standing, and it's reflecting ourself.

[41 : 50] I hope that all of us today can see our reflection, our propensity to do the very same things the disciples were doing.

Church, here's the shock. We thought we were staring out the window to the disciples, yet as the text darkens and the light caught just the glass at the right moment, suddenly we're looking at us, we see ourselves, our lack of faith, our hunger for status, and above all, our desperate need, pitiful need of God's grace.

But remember, the window's main purpose isn't to reflect. That's not a window's purpose, but it's to look through, it's to see.

And when you look through these windows, I hope that you do see Jesus Christ as he is and how he intended to be seen. The one who heals our unbelief, the one who embraces the cross, which for us is a model of humility that we should strive.

And we see the one who humbles the proud. James 1, 22-25 warns us that if we look into the mirror of God's word and walk away unchanged, in the same, you deceive yourself.

[43 : 26] You know nothing about God's word, you know nothing about yourself. But if you act on what you see, you will be blessed, according to James.

And this is where Augustine helps us again. Remember, remember his confession, he said, I became a problem to myself.

And I left it short. He didn't actually stop there. And I think that we should continue. He continued. After saying, I became a problem to myself, he says, but you, oh Lord, are my helper and my redeemer.

Augustine knew what Luke 9 teaches us today. That the reflection isn't the end of our story, Christ is.

Amen, indeed. So when unbelief is literally staring you, they're staring back at you, turn to Jesus Christ in dependent prayer.

[44 : 37] When pride glares back at you, humble yourself, serve the lowly in his name, and in both, cling to the cross while you're doing it, where majesty and humility meet, where sin is unmasked and where grace overflows.

Following Jesus unmasks what's hidden in our hearts, calling us to humility and faith. Hear this call today and act, church.

Let's pray. Let's pray.