

Sun., April 3 - Holy Communion (Pastor Cassi)

Memory Verse: Luke 9:20 “Jesus asked them, ‘And what about you? Who do you say that I am?’

Peter answered, ‘The Christ sent from God.’”

Reading of Scripture: Luke 9:28-36 (Reading the Transformation story again)

Message: Luke 3 Miracle 6: “Halfway Turn”

Text: Luke 9:44 ““Take these words to heart: the Son of Man is about to be delivered into human hands.””

Scripture: Luke 9:37-51

Blurb: In Luke 9 we come to the halfway point of Jesus’ earthly ministry, and something changes. Jesus becomes very focused on heading to Jerusalem. His teaching changes, too. Now He talks more about sacrifice and suffering. If we are to keep following Jesus, we need to decide to embrace self sacrifice like Jesus has. The road just got harder!

[Recorded Worship Beginning]

WELCOME -Pastor David

Holy Communion - Open Communion - Get bread and juice to use at home.

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David

Luke 9:20 “Jesus asked them, ‘And what about you? Who do you say that I am?’ Peter answered, ‘The Christ sent from God.’”

WORSHIP MUSIC SET -Prerecording

Death Was Arrested

Worship prayer -Pastor Andrew

[Live Worship Beginning]

GATHERING SONG: *Death Was Arrested* -Sanctify

WELCOME -Pastor David

Holy Communion - Open Communion

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David

Luke 9:20 “Jesus asked them, ‘And what about you? Who do you say that I am?’ Peter answered, ‘The Christ sent from God.’”

WORSHIP MUSIC SET -Sanctify

Blessed Are All (Only in Jesus)

O Christ, the Healer

Have It All

Worship prayer -Pastor Andrew

[Both Recorded & Live Worship]

READING OF SCRIPTURE: Luke 9:28-36

We go back and re-read the story of Jesus' Transfiguration. This time, as you hear it, listen for two things. The first is what it was that Jesus, Moses and Elijah talked about. The second is what the voice from above says. Luke 9:28-36,

“28 About eight days after Jesus said these things, He took Peter, John, and James, and went up on a mountain to pray. 29 As He was praying, the appearance of His face changed and His clothes flashed white like lightning. 30 Two men, Moses and Elijah, were talking with Him. 31 They were clothed with heavenly splendor and spoke about Jesus' departure, which He would achieve in Jerusalem. 32 Peter and those with Him were almost overcome by sleep, but they managed to stay awake and saw His glory as well as the two men with Him.

“33 As the two men were about to leave Jesus, Peter said to Him, ‘Master, it’s good that we’re here. We should construct three shrines: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah’—but he didn’t know what he was saying. 34 Peter was still speaking when a cloud overshadowed them. As they entered the cloud, they were overcome with awe.

“35 Then a voice from the cloud said, ‘This is my Son, my chosen one. Listen to Him!’ 36 Even as the voice spoke, Jesus was found alone. They were speechless and at the time told no one what they had seen.”

SERVE MOMENT: “Easter Hop” -Pastor Andrew

GENERATIONAL BRIDGE -Pastor Andrew

MESSAGE: Luke 3 Miracle (Luke 7-9) 6: “Halfway Turn”

PP#1: Miracle 6: “Halfway Turn”

“Take these words to heart: the Son of Man is about to be delivered into human hands.” - Luke 9:44

“Miracle: Halfway Turn.” Luke 9:44 “Take these words to heart: the Son of Man is about to be delivered into human hands.”

PP#2: *Images for a hiker marking a halfway point, perhaps looking back and forward?*

Let’s take a break and sit down for a bit, shall we? We’ve been following Jesus with Luke since November. We’ve got quite a ways to go yet, as we’ll keep going until Thanksgiving. But today we stop for a rest. You see, we’ve reach our half way point. We’re not half way through Luke, for Luke is 24 chapters. But here in chapter 9, Luke is halfway through Jesus’ three-and-a-half years of earthly ministry. Luke, and the other Gospel writers, spend a lot more words on the last week of Jesus’ life: His entry into Jerusalem—which we’ll celebrate next week, His arrest, trial, crucifixion and resurrection. Luke spends the last quarter of his Gospel telling this story.

PP#3: Jesus' Public Ministry (Jesus aged about 30 - 33½)

Birth Story

First Year (Year of Inauguration): Baptism and move to Capernaum

Second Year (Year of Popularity): Ministry around Galilee

Third Year (Year of Opposition): Travels into Judea

Last Months (Jesus Rejected): Ministry around Judea & Perea

Holy Week (Jerusalem): Arrested, crucified and resurrected

Ascension back to heaven

But at the halfway point, you stop and take a look back to see your progress, and you look ahead to see where you're going. As we look back over the past not quite two years of Jesus' public ministry, we saw in His first year Jesus step into the public eye, be baptized by John the Baptist, announce using Isaiah 61 that He was the promised Messiah sent from God, and then move His headquarters to Capernaum and calling disciples. Then, in His second year Jesus' popularity soared as He and His disciples traveled around showing His identity and authority over all powers by performing shocking miracles of physical and spiritual healing. But now, here in Luke chapter 9, Jesus travels to the very extreme north of Israel, to Mount Hermon. And this marks the transition to His second phase of ministry, where His popularity begins to fade, followers drift away, He faces growing opposition, all culminating in His crucifixion down in Jerusalem.

PP#4: Jesus' Earthly Ministry

	1st Half (Luke 3-4):	2nd Half (Luke 9):
Identity Revealed:	John the Baptist	Peter
God Speaks:	Baptism	Transfiguration
Mountain:	Temptation	Transfiguration
Spars w/Evil:	Temptation	Boy w/Evil Spirit
Prophets:	Isaiah 61	Moses & Elijah
Depart:	Fr. Nazareth	Fr. Galilee
Destination:	For Capernaum	For Judea
Disciples:	Called	Cost of Discipleship

I made this handy chart...of course! I hope it helps you see how Luke is marking this major change. It's almost like chapter 9 serves as a "reset" of Jesus' ministry, with many parallel experiences. Both at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, and now here halfway, Jesus' true identity is professed, first by John the Baptist in chapter 3 and by Peter's profession at Caesarea Philippi in chapter 9 (we're making that our memory verse this week). God speaks at Jesus' baptism and now at His Transfiguration (we just heard that story again). Jesus then spars with evil, and then heads to a new destination. The first half of His public ministry was centered around Galilee. But now in Chapter 9, Jesus leaves Galilee and heads south.

You and I, we finally moved from being just one of the crowd watching Jesus to being one of the disciples following Jesus. And now in chapter 9 we hear Jesus describe the cost of discipleship. Up until now, Jesus has been popular. Our question was, "Who is this Jesus?" and then "Are we going to follow Him?" But now with His harder calling to self denial, our question becomes, "Will we stay with Jesus?"

PP#5: *Map showing Jesus' route from Capernaum to Tobga to Mt. Hermon in the north and then down into Samaria and Judea*

Turn with me to Luke 9. The chapter begins with Jesus and His disciples in Capernaum heading out—separately—around the area of Galilee. Then, when the disciples rejoin Jesus, verse 10, Jesus feeds the 5,000 near Bethsaida, on the western side of the sea of Galilee. Jesus then takes the disciples and heads due north. Near Caesarea Philippi is where, Luke 9:20, “Jesus asked them, ‘And what about you? Who do you say that I am?’ Peter answered, ‘The Christ sent from God.’”

They then likely head up Mount Hermon where Jesus is Transfigured and His holy identity radiates through. In your Bible’s heading above Luke 9:28, where it says “The Transfiguration,” make a note: “Halfway point of Jesus’ ministry.” And now, here at the halfway point, Jesus makes a very significant *turn*. As Jesus leads the three down the mountain, He turns toward a different destination. He is no longer going to travel around Galilee *announcing* the Kingdom of God. Now He sets His sites toward Judea, and from here on out, beginning at the top of Mount Hermon, Jesus is heading towards Jerusalem, where He will *win* the Kingdom of God on earth.

PP#6: Luke 9:37-51

37 The next day, when Jesus, Peter, John, and James had come down from the mountain, a large crowd met Jesus. 38 A man from the crowd shouted, “Teacher, I beg you to take a look at my son, my only child. 39 Look, a spirit seizes him and, without any warning, he screams. It shakes him and causes him to foam at the mouth. It tortures him and rarely leaves him alone. 40 I begged your disciples to throw it out, but they couldn’t.”

Let’s read, picking it up in verse 37. “The next day, when Jesus, Peter, John, and James had come down from the mountain, a large crowd met Jesus.” Now, this is a familiar experience, right? Jesus comes, and a crowd gathers. Verse 38, “A man from the crowd shouted, ‘Teacher, I beg you to take a look at my son, my only child. 39 Look, a spirit seizes him and, without any warning, he screams. It shakes him and causes him to foam at the mouth. It tortures him and rarely leaves him alone. 40 I begged your disciples to throw it out, but they couldn’t.’”

This is also familiar. Remember when Jesus came back to Capernaum: the first time the Roman centurion begged Jesus to heal his slave, and the second time the leader of the Synagogue begged Jesus to heal his daughter. Now, a man in the crowd begs Jesus to heal his only son.

Once again, Jesus faces spiritual warfare. But we’ve learned that Jesus has total authority, right? And this time the demon looks less like actual demon possession and more like epilepsy. To them in that day they really didn’t make much of a distinction. And that’s okay because Jesus commands power to heal both physically and spiritually.

Now, evidently at least some of the disciples had encountered this man before, and they were unable to heal the boy. Matthew and Mark include the disciples asking why they couldn’t heal the son, and Jesus flatly says, “Because you have so little faith” (Matt. 17:20). Remember, Jesus had given them a special dispensation of His power to heal and then sent them out? Evidently they struggled a bit, and in their belief in Jesus’ power to actually do it.

PP#7: Luke 9:37-51

41 Jesus answered, “You faithless and crooked generation, how long will I be with you and put up with you? Bring your son here.” 42 While he was coming, the demon threw him down and shook him violently. Jesus spoke harshly to the unclean spirit, healed the child, and gave him back to his father. 43 Everyone was overwhelmed by God’s greatness.

Jesus isn't very pleased. Verse 41, "Jesus answered, 'You faithless and crooked generation, how long will I be with you and put up with you?'" Remember, Jesus knows He's heading to Jerusalem where He will die, be raised and then go back to glory. He's trying to train His disciples to take over His ministry. He's given them His power, but they just lack the faith! Is Jesus worried? His human side certainly is! You know, I think about this verse. I wonder how often Jesus ends up saying that about me! My faith, like the disciples, can wobble.

But, of course, Jesus takes care of what His disciples can't quite pull off. He says to the father, "'Bring your son here.' 42 While he was coming, the demon threw him down and shook him violently. [This is not just a coincidence. There must be some demonic element to his epilepsy, it seems.] Jesus spoke harshly to the unclean spirit, healed the child, and gave him back to his father. 43 Everyone was overwhelmed by God's greatness." Familiar ending: everyone praising God.

PP#8: Luke 9:37-51

While everyone was marveling at everything He was doing, Jesus said to His disciples, 44 "Take these words to heart: the Son of Man is about to be delivered into human hands." 45 They didn't understand this statement. Its meaning was hidden from them so they couldn't grasp it. And they were afraid to ask Him about it.

But, right during all the hype and celebration, Jesus speaks some very serious words to His disciples. "While everyone was marveling at everything He was doing, Jesus said to His disciples, 44 'Take these words to heart: [Remember, back on the mountain, God's voice rang out, "This is my son, whom I have chosen; listen to Him!"] (9:35) So, are you listening? What is He saying? He says,] 'Take these words to heart: the Son of Man [we now know that means Jesus as the Messiah] is about to be delivered into human hands.' 45 They didn't understand this statement. Its meaning was hidden from them so they couldn't grasp it. And they were afraid to ask Him about it."

PP#9: Halfway Turn

1. Take Jesus' words to heart

He had explained this back at Caesarea Philippi, after Peter correctly professed He was the Christ. But what does the Christ look like? What does it mean? All healing and power and authority? Yes, but not just that. Don't get lost in the praise and wonder and marveling. Take to heart: it's not just all about the good stuff. There's a spiritual war going on. The true love of God is about sacrifice. It's about giving yourself for others. Jesus says this is what He is doing, and He's asking us to do it, too.

PP#10: Halfway Turn

1. Take Jesus' words to heart
2. Follow a self-sacrificing Savior

So, how about it, disciple? Are you willing to live this way, to give yourself like this? Are you going to stay with this Jesus? Or now, when it gets hard, are you going to slip away and go back to doing things your way? Why do you follow Jesus, anyway? Remember, we're in Lent. It's time to be asking these hard, probing questions! Are we only after the benefits, or are we willing to sacrifice? And this is not just hard *ideas*. Jesus means *living* it out, like choosing to go without something you want so you can give more generously, like going over and engaging that annoying

person, like forgiving that person who really hurt you and treating them well, like getting out of bed early on a Saturday morning to go volunteer.

PP#11: Halfway Turn

1. Take Jesus' words to heart
2. Follow a self-sacrificing Savior
3. Give yourself to others even to suffer

Or, maybe like the disciples in the story, we suddenly develop selective hearing. We don't hear well what we don't want to hear. Right? It says the disciples didn't understand what He was saying, and that they were afraid to ask Him. Actually, it says that "it was hidden from them." I think this doesn't mean that God purposefully blocked their understanding. I think this means that they were unable to understand this yet. They just can't fathom at this point the kind of cost Jesus was talking about. It's only after they see Him dying on the cross that are they able to even begin to understand. And, I think when it says that they were too afraid to ask Jesus about it, it doesn't mean that they were too afraid of looking dumb to Jesus, although He was frustrated with their lack of faith. I think, at least in part, that they were too afraid He might just actually go there, where they suspected He might be going. But for now, let's just put that off, and not think about that.

We do that too, don't we? We know Jesus might be calling us to give up our own plans and dreams and schedules and comforts and lives we've built for ourselves, the way we spend our days. So, let's not listen too closely, and then we won't have to deal with that right now. We can deal with that later. For now, just think happy thoughts.

PP#12: Luke 9:37-51

46 An argument arose among the disciples about which of them was the greatest. 47 Aware of their deepest thoughts, Jesus took a little child and had the child stand beside Him. 48 Jesus said to His disciples, "Whoever welcomes this child in my name welcomes me. Whoever welcomes me, welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever is least among you all is the greatest."

So, what are the happy thoughts that the disciples want to think about instead? Rather than sacrificing themselves, rather than giving and humbly serving others, what's on their minds? Don't miss the stark contrast here that Luke is pointing out! Verse 46, "An argument arose among the disciples about which of them was the greatest. [Careful! Don't judge them too harshly: for sometimes when we look at the disciples we see a mirror!]" 47 Aware of their deepest thoughts [again we see Jesus, as God, knows all our thoughts], Jesus took a little child and had the child stand beside Him. 48 Jesus said to His disciples, "Whoever welcomes this child in my name welcomes me. Whoever welcomes me, welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever is least among you all is the greatest."

PP#13: *An image of an adorable and cute toddler*

At least three different times Jesus uses children as a parable to teach His disciples. In Matthew 18 Jesus places a child among His disciples and tells them that they need to *become like* the child in order to enter God's Kingdom. He's referring to trusting and loving like a child does. Later in Luke, chapter 18, Jesus calls the children to come to Him and for them not to be prevented,

because God’s Kingdom belongs to such as these. And then there is this time, when Jesus said that His disciples need to welcome children.

It’s hard for us today to understand Jesus’ point here. You see, for us, we usually view children as cute and adorable. “Awww, what a cute face! And when we see a kid screaming in the grocery store, we tell the parents, “Isn’t he just precious?”

PP#14: *An image of a dirty, crying and miserable toddler*

But in Jesus’ day, remember, they didn’t have diapers. Kids were soiled, messy and smelly. You tried to avoid them if at all possible. Maybe, for us today we should understand this passage like this: “When sitting on an airplane and the only empty seat left is next to you, and you see a frazzled mother coming down the aisle with a screaming kid in a tantrum, “whoever welcomes this child in my name welcomes me.” Maybe that helps you get Jesus’ point.

PP#15: Halfway Turn

1. Take Jesus’ words to heart
2. Follow a self-sacrificing Savior
3. Give yourself to others even to suffer
4. Welcome the annoying

You see, it’s not about getting all the good stuff, having things go well, easy, being comfortable. When you follow Jesus, you do what He does: He has time, capacity, and attention for the annoying. He welcomes those others want to avoid. You want Jesus, you want God? Then, welcome the bratty. For, Jesus says, when you welcome them, you welcome Jesus, and when you welcome Jesus, you welcome God the Father. You have to position yourself not at the top—powerful, comfortable, your way—but at the bottom. The greatest, says Jesus, are those who make themselves the least. After all, that’s where Jesus goes.

PP#16: Luke 9:37-51

49 John replied, “Master, we saw someone throwing demons out in your name, and we tried to stop him because he isn’t in our group of followers.”

50 But Jesus replied, “Don’t stop him, because whoever isn’t against you is for you.”
[Compare: Luke 11:23 Jesus said, “Whoever isn’t with me is against me, and whoever doesn’t gather with me, scatters.”]

Speaking of who is great and who isn’t, John brings up another past concern...perhaps also from the time when they couldn’t heal the boy. Verse 49, “John replied, ‘Master, we saw someone throwing demons out in your name, and we tried to stop him because he isn’t in our group of followers.’ 50 But Jesus replied, ‘Don’t stop him, because whoever isn’t against you is for you.’”

So, the disciples couldn’t heal the boy going into seizures, but this other guy, not with their group, was successfully casting out demons, in Jesus’ name.

This is a good example that shows how we have to be so careful to not pull verses of Scripture out of context. Jesus’ response is, “Whoever isn’t against you is for you.” But then, two chapters later, Jesus says in Luke 11:23, “Whoever isn’t with me is against me.” If you pull these verses out of context, Jesus directly contradicts Himself!

So, which is it? The answer is that both are true! Look at their contexts. In Luke 9, the mysterious miracle worker is invoking the name of Jesus, just like the disciples were. Evidently, that guy was a disciple of Jesus, even if not with Jesus' group. And notice how Jesus switches the pronoun in 9:50, "whoever isn't against YOU is for YOU." In 11:23, Jesus says "whoever isn't with ME is against ME." The first guy, it seems, is with Jesus, even if not with the disciples. Perhaps Jesus had a previous encounter with him at some point that the disciples didn't know about. But the second time Jesus is talking about people who are not with Jesus. So, holding these together, we get the bigger picture: If they are "for" Jesus, even though not with you, then let them keep going. If, however, they are not "for" Jesus, then treat them as against Jesus. It's less about how much Jesus' disciples want to work together and more about that if we claim Jesus, then we are on the same team.

PP#17: Halfway Turn

1. Take Jesus' words to heart
2. Follow a self-sacrificing Savior
3. Give yourself to others even to suffer
4. Welcome the annoying
5. Let others serve Jesus their way

So, always keep your Scriptures in context! And in this passage, as Jesus begins to face growing opposition ahead, we learn that we should expect Jesus' work to happen even when we aren't a part of it, and through people we may not expect. That's part of the humility of being the least. It's not just all about what you do. If they are working for Jesus, let them work. They don't have to do things your way. Leave that up to God. Now, this is not talking about those who *falsely* claim Jesus. There are other passages that address that. But, if they claim the name of Jesus, let them serve Jesus their way. This is really powerful for us today! We need to learn to be Jesus' Church, all together. Too often we argue about our differences, and who's right and who's wrong. The world looks at Christians, and at the different denominations and branches of the Church, and how we argue and fight and point fingers about how each other is getting it wrong, and they do not want that Jesus. How much better our witness when we say, "It's not my way, but if they love Jesus, God bless them." And, *gasp!*, might we even find a way of actually working together, despite our differences?

PP#18: Luke 9:37-51

51 As the time approached when Jesus was to be taken up into heaven, He determined ["set His face"] to go to Jerusalem.

Isaiah 50:7 "The Lord God will help me; therefore, I haven't been insulted. Therefore, *I set my face like flint*, and knew I wouldn't be ashamed."

I want to end by looking at the next verse. It's the first verse of the next story, but it marks again how we've reached the halfway point in the journey with Jesus. They've come down the mountain and they're heading south through Galilee, but this time they're not staying. Verse 51, "As the time approached when Jesus was to be taken up into heaven, He determined to go to Jerusalem." On the mountain it became clear to Jesus that it was now time to head toward the full purpose He came for: to die on the cross, be raised again, and then ascend back to heaven.

I don't want you to miss the importance of this simple little verse. It says that Jesus *determined* to go to Jerusalem. The literal translation of this verb is "set His face." That is so powerful! Jesus knew fully what it meant to go to Jerusalem. He just explained it again. And He

chose to go anyway. He's not some victim. He's not a pawn. He willfully and purposefully chose it, and He heads that way to go make it happen. I think it's a reference to the messianic passage of Isaiah 50:7, "The Lord God will help me; therefore, I haven't been insulted. Therefore, *I set my face like flint*, and knew I wouldn't be ashamed."

Jesus chooses, decides, resolves, determines, fixes His face to His calling in Jerusalem. This is where our salvation is won: not *that* Jesus was crucified, but because Jesus *chose* to give Himself willingly as our sacrifice, and *doggedly pushes through* with it.

PP#19: Halfway Turn

1. Take Jesus' words to heart
2. Follow a self-sacrificing Savior
3. Give yourself to others even to suffer
4. Welcome the annoying
5. Let others serve Jesus their way
6. Set your face to self-sacrifice

This is the Jesus we follow. It's not about comfort, or convenience. It's about conviction. As the crowds drift away, will we set our faces to this same calling of self-sacrifice?

We've been sitting a spell, at this halfway point, looking back from whence we've come, and looking forward to where Jesus is headed. He's set His face and is moving again. As we now get up again, to where are we going to set our faces?

Amen.

HOLY COMMUNION -Pastor Cassi

Prayers of Confession

Words of Assurance

Introduction to Holy Communion/Great Thanksgiving

Words of Institution

Prayer for the Holy Spirit

Receiving the Elements

Closing Prayer

[Live Worship Only] CLOSING SONG: *The Lion and the Lamb* -Sanctify

OFFERING & ANNOUNCEMENTS -Pastor David

Wednesday night: Wed. meal, Grow groups, Echo, Youth Group

Next Sunday's message: Palm Sunday!

Read ahead: Luke 9:51-62

Next Sunday: Easter Hop!

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David

Luke 9:20 "Jesus asked them, 'And what about you? Who do you say that I am?' Peter answered, 'The Christ sent from God.'"

BENEDICTION -Pastor David

POSTLUDE -Sanctify (live)