

Jesus Send 72 Young Disciples to Proclaim the Kingdom of God
Luke 10:1-24
Key Verse: 10:9

"Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you.'"

We are entering a portion of Luke's gospel that is unique. The events of today's passage are recorded only by Luke. It is the beginning of what many scholars call Jesus' "Judean ministry" (9:51-13:21). Next, Luke recounts Jesus' "Perean ministry" (13:22-19:27). These sections, covering roughly chapters 10-19, contain many events and parables which only Luke tells. One major theme of this part is Jesus' compassion for the lost, including the Gentiles. In today's passage Jesus sends out seventy-two young disciples to prepare his entry into Judean towns and villages. Though they were weak, they experienced the power of God. We learn many things from Jesus. Mostly, we learn Jesus' compassion for the lost, and his message of peace and the kingdom. Through this study, I pray that Jesus may equip each of us with his compassion and message, and send us to the people of our times.

I. "Ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers..." (1-4)

Look at verse 1. "After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go." Until now, Jesus had focused his training on the Twelve and had given them many privileges. However, this time Jesus appointed seventy-two others and sent them out. Perhaps he was giving the Twelve a break so they could take his teaching more seriously. In any case, Jesus did not hesitate to raise younger leaders and send them on a training mission. It came from Jesus' burning passion to reach the lost with his message by any means. Jesus had determined to go the way of the cross, and he was raising disciples who would spread his message with power.

Jesus sent them out two by two. Jesus wanted them to work and pray together. Jesus said in Matthew 18:19, "Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven." When two people agree in Jesus, God answers their prayers. But there is a problem. Most human beings are opinionated and self-centered. They speak and act according to their own ideas. Such people need to learn to yield to Jesus, as well as to their coworker. Then they can follow Jesus together. Jesus receives glory for their work. They can really help each other. Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 say, "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up." One person cannot do God's work all by himself. We must pray with, and work with, others. This is the key to Jesus' blessing on our gospel ministry.

Jesus sent his young disciples ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. Jesus' detailed preparation shows us his heart for the lost. Jesus did not want anyone to perish. So he did not want anyone to miss the message of good news. Jesus took great pains to reach every town and place, and to find every lost soul without missing one. Jesus' young disciples were to be forerunners, similar to John the Baptist. Look at verse 2. "He told them, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.'" Jesus shared his great vision and prayer topic with his disciples. Jesus wanted them to know his heart. Jesus compared mankind to a harvest field. A farmer values a ripened crop, appreciating the labor and tears that were necessary to produce it. So he harvests with due diligence at the right time. How much more our loving God values a harvest of souls for eternal life! Jesus had a sense of urgency about this. Many burdened people longed for the rest that only Jesus gives. Many despairing people longed for the hope that only Jesus gives. Many who were full of guilt and shame longed for the forgiveness that only Jesus gives. Jesus sees through the trappings of culture and outer appearances. Jesus sees into human hearts. Jesus hears the cry of the human soul that no one else can hear. Jesus is eager to harvest right away, without missing one. "The harvest is plentiful." Postmodern young people are crying for salvation that only Jesus gives.

The problem, then and now, is that the workers are few. Of course, there are many religious people. But most of them are not workers. They are too busy with their own affairs to care about others. They are motivated by their own honor and success, not by concern for the lost. In such a situation, Jesus did not sigh and despair. Jesus prayed--and asked young disciples to pray--that the Lord of the harvest would send out workers. Here we learn that prayer is essential in the harvest of souls. Jesus is the Lord of the harvest. He alone has the right and power to harvest souls for eternal life. Therefore, we must pray to him. When we pray, we can share Jesus' vision and compassion for the

lost. When we see things as Jesus does, our hearts begin to burn for the salvation of the lost. Then we can be useful to Jesus. The students at Chicago area universities look fine outwardly. Many come from decent families who are rich enough to invest in their success, and they study well. But many are crying inwardly over dysfunctionality and meaninglessness. One even committed suicide recently. Jesus hears the cry of their souls and wants to reach out to them. We can be useful when we pray until we come to share his heart. Without this kind of prayer, we are little more than Christian businessmen. "O Jesus, Lord of the harvest, send out workers who know your heart into your harvest field!"

Look at verse 3. "Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves." When the disciples prayed, Jesus sent them out. Though they were young and inexperienced, Jesus sent them out. Jesus is eager to send out workers. Jesus called them "lambs among wolves." Lambs are cute and helpless. Wolves are strong and predatory, like the devil and his agents. If we send a lamb among wolves, the wolves will eat the lamb in short order. Jesus was well aware that his disciples were weak and immature. Jesus knew the danger they were facing. They were no match for the spiritual forces of evil arrayed against them. Still, Jesus sent them out of compassion for the lost. They did not go alone; Jesus' spiritual power went with them. Jesus' power was sufficient for them to overcome evil and do great work. So, when Jesus tells us "Go!" we must go with confidence by faith in Jesus' power. Earlier this year, two young women, who look like cute lambs, "went" to downtown campuses to share the gospel with students. Within a short time, both met three new students who began Bible study and enjoy it immensely.

Look at verse 4a. "Do not take a purse or bag or sandals...." If a sinful human being has \$20 in his pocket, he thinks about the power of that \$20. Thus his thinking is limited. Jesus sent the disciples with nothing so that they would only depend on him. Jesus has all the resources of heaven and earth. Jesus is God Almighty. Those who depend on Jesus are rich and powerful, even when they have nothing in their hands; they can do great work. Jesus also said, "...and do not greet anyone on the road" (4b). It was not because Jesus is not friendly. It is because he wanted the vulnerable disciples to focus on their mission and not be distracted by aimless small talk. It might tempt them to turn aside from their mission. Jesus might tell us to turn off our cell phones or Blackberries during Bible study. He would certainly prohibit texting during worship service. In this part we mainly learn that evangelism originates in the heart of Jesus. Jesus is full of compassion for lost souls. We become useful when we pray until we share his heart for the lost.

II. The messages of peace and the kingdom of God (5-16)

This section can be divided into three parts. In verses 5-7, Jesus gives instructions for entering a house. In verses 8-11, Jesus gives instructions for entering a town. In verses 12-16, Jesus tells us what kind of attitude his people must have toward his message.

First, "say, 'Peace to this house'" (5-7). Look at verses 5-6. "When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you." "Peace to this house," was more than a greeting, it was a blessing. It was equivalent to the message of the kingdom in Jewish thought. In English, we generally think of "peace" as the absence of war. However, "peace" as it is used here, has a much richer meaning than that. "Eirene" in Greek, it is equivalent to the Hebrew "shalom." "Shalom" refers to having a right relationship with God and enjoying his abundant blessing. "Shalom" includes material well-being and prosperity, success in business, in study, and in one's career (Gen 29:6; 37:14), a healthy and strong body (Gen 43:28; Ps 38:3), mutually edifying friendships (Josh 9:15; 1 Ki 5:12; Jer 33:6), a covenant of peace with God (Isa 54:10), and the inner peace that comes from a godly moral life (Ps 34:14; 37:37; Zech 8:16). To proclaim "Peace to this house," was to pronounce all of this rich blessing upon the recipient. Though the disciples had nothing in their hands, they were bearers of this great blessing. In giving this blessing, they needed discernment. Only those who responded with faith were worthy of it. The disciples should stay in receptive homes, accepting the hospitality that was offered to them. They were Jesus' workers, worthy of food and lodging. As they stayed in that one place, God's blessing would take root and spread in that town.

Later, when Jesus sent his disciples into the world, he told them, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you" (Jn 14:27a). The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 5:1, "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ...." Gospel workers are not poor beggars trying to sell unwanted goods. They are ambassadors of God's peace to a desperate world. We must have an inner conviction that God will use us as a great blessing to any house that receives us.

Second, "...tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you'" (8-11). Look at verse 8. "When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you." Jesus' vision extended beyond individual homes to towns and villages. When a town welcomed them, the disciples should eat the food they were served. This was a sign of mutual acceptance. This affirmed the dignity of the townspeople and drew them into God's work. Furthermore, food is an important part of culture. The disciples, who were from Galilee, would be eating Judean and Perea food. In doing so, they were taking a bite of that culture. It signified acceptance and embrace of the townspeople's culture.

Though having eating fellowship is important, it was not the main point of Jesus' instruction. This is found in verse 9. Jesus said, "Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you.'" Healing and preaching is exactly what Jesus had been doing. It required identifying with the pain and suffering of people and exercising God's power to help them. Jesus did not send his disciples just to dispatch information. Jesus sent them to shepherd suffering people by healing the sick. Healing was so important that Jesus mentioned it first in his instruction. Many say, "I don't have the gift of healing." Perhaps. But healing is not always the result of a miracle. We don't need the gift of healing to bring Advil to a person with a headache, or orange juice to a person with a cold. Anyone can pray for and visit sick people. This opens their hearts to Jesus' message. One way Christian faith penetrated the Roman Empire was through healing. During plagues, Christians cared for the sick, risking their lives, while Roman citizens fled to safety. So the sick trusted Christians, opening their hearts to Jesus' message.

The message is, "The kingdom of God is near you." This meant that Jesus, the King, was near. Advertisers in our time use the phrase, "Coming soon to a theatre near you." They want us to go and see the great movie they are promoting. Jesus disciples advertised that Jesus was near. They urged people to go and see Jesus. Those who did so would have the chance to hear Jesus' word. If they accepted his word and acknowledged him, they would receive the blessing of the kingdom of God within them. For individual people this meant freedom from the torment of demons, forgiveness of sins and restoration of a right relationship with God. They could enjoy love and peace and joy from God like a fountain flowing in their souls; like living water to quench their spiritual thirst and make them a blessing.

However, in the context of Jesus' teaching, the kingdom comes to entire towns and villages. As we have seen in Christian history, when any town or nation accepts Jesus as King, they experience the kingdom of God. God dwells with them and blesses their institutions and families and individual people in extraordinary ways. For example, there is a place called Logan County, Kentucky. Until about 1800, it was characterized as a frontier town. The men were violent. They drank a lot of whiskey and fought each other in vicious brawls. Some even fought with bears. Women were hardhearted and the children were all wild. Then a godly Presbyterian minister, James McGready, began to pray for that county. He covenanted with other believers to fast and pray on the third Saturday each month and to set aside other regular times of prayer, to cry out for spiritual revival among the sinners of Logan county. After one year, God began to answer. About 100 people received Christ at a revival meeting. The next year the number increased to 1,000. The following year, it was 10,000. And the following year it was 25,000, which was one-eighth of the population of the whole state of Kentucky. The effect of this revival was palpable. Fighting ceased. The whiskey business fell off sharply. People began to love each other and help each other. Fathers paid close attention to the spiritual lives of their children. Wives respected their husbands and prayed for them. Everyone attended church on Sunday and praised and worshiped with all their hearts. In their homes on Sunday evening, family worship services went on with the reading of Psalms and much singing and laughter. This was one of the sources of a national spiritual revival we call the Second Great Awakening. The kingdom of God came to this earth in power. This challenges us to believe that God can bring such a spiritual revival to the people of our times as well. Of course, we must share the message of the kingdom with individual students through personal evangelism and Bible study. But we should also have a bigger vision and prayer topic: for North America to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Our mighty God is able to do this and much more wherever Jesus is accepted as King.

However, not everyone believes. Look at verses 10-11. Some people do not welcome Jesus and his servants. Jesus' servants may feel sorry about their rejection. Instead, they must wipe the dust off their feet, clearly dissociating from rebellious people. They must reiterate the message, "the kingdom of God is near." It becomes a warning of God's judgment.

Third, "He who rejects you rejects me, and him who sent me" (12-16). In verses 12-15 Jesus gives a harsh warning to the towns in which most of his miracles were performed: Korazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum. In fact, Jesus warned that it would be more bearable for the Gentile towns of Sodom, Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than

for those towns. Wow! This is really a surprising statement. The book of Genesis teaches us that God judged the immoral town of Sodom by sending fire and sulfur that burned up the city and everyone who lived there. It was a terrible judgment. However, Jesus warned that the judgment against Korazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum would be more severe. Why is this? It was because people in those towns had received the amazing grace of seeing Jesus' miracles with their own eyes and hearing his word with their own ears, and yet they did not repent their sins. Jesus judges people based on how much grace they have received. Those who have received greater revelation have a greater responsibility to repent. Rejecting the kingdom to avoid repentance is very foolish. Those who do will face terrible consequences on Judgment Day. Jesus' disciples must proclaim the kingdom as his representatives, with full spiritual authority. Those who reject them reject Christ, the only salvation God has given.

III. Jesus' victory and joy (17-24)

What happened when the young disciples went out? Look at verse 17. The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." They experienced the mighty power of Jesus and they were very happy. Jesus was glad they were joyful. He wanted them to be joyful always. So he taught them how to be so. In the first place, they should see their small victories as merely a part of God's complete victory over Satan. God Almighty can toss Satan around like a lightning bolt. Jesus shares this authority with his servants. We must keep our eyes on Jesus who gives us victory. This gives us assurance of eternal victory; nothing can harm us.

In the second place, they should rejoice most over their salvation. Having our "names written in heaven" (20) means that God know us and we know him. Knowing God gives us eternal life (Jn 17:3). This is the best blessing God can give, the treasure that surpasses all others. We have already received this by faith in Jesus. Regardless of our performance, our lives are secure in God. This gives us true spiritual joy in any circumstance.

Jesus taught his disciples further by his own example. Jesus' joy was from the Holy Spirit. Jesus further rejoiced in his personal relationship with the Father. He appreciated the Father's trust and the unique knowledge they shared about each other. In a word, Jesus' joy came from his own relationship within the Trinity, not from the situation or the small victories the disciples had won. Finally, Jesus taught his disciples to rejoice over their unique place in God's history (23,24). They had the privilege of living with the Son of God in the flesh. While we do not share that privilege, we are also greatly blessed. We have seen the kingdom of God expand to the ends of the earth through 2,000 years of Christian history. We can see how God is fulfilling world salvation. We can hear about what God is doing all over the world every day! We have enough reason to rejoice in Jesus always.

In this passage we learn Jesus' great compassion to reach out to a lost world through his young disciples. Let's pray: "Lord, send out workers into your harvest field!" "Your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven!" May the Lord send us out to share his kingdom on Chicago area college campuses.