

March 24, 2019
Sunday Morning Service
Series: Luke
Community Baptist Church
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To Ponder . . .

Questions to ponder as we prepare to hear from Luke 10:1-20.

1. Why did Christ repeat the action of sending out the apostles by sending out seventy more messengers?
2. Why did Christ send out the seventy messengers to places where He planned to go?
3. What is the “harvest” of people?
4. Why should we pray to the *Lord of the harvest*, and what does that title mean?
5. What does this mean, “The kingdom of God has come near”?
6. What did Jesus see when He saw Satan falling like lightning from heaven?
7. How do you experience the greater joy of knowing your name is written in heaven?

REJOICING MESSENGERS **Luke 10:1-20**

Communication is an art and becoming more of a lost art as the age wears on. Some people are very open and transparent, communicating to others way more than others care to know. It is

difficult to have helpful relationships with people like that because you are afraid of what you might hear.

Others communicate like a closed book. There is a lot of information in there, and often very important or very interesting information. But for the spouse, coworker, friend to try to get the good and important information out is frustrating at best. Like, it isn't going to happen, which almost always sabotages the relationship.

Some people's communication skills remind me of sitting through a hurricane. It is not a pleasant situation, and it just seems to go on and on and on so that you begin to wonder where it will end.

The art of communication requires that we have something worth communicating. Then real communication happens when we sincerely believe that what we have to say will benefit the listeners. If we really care for the listener, we will be careful to communicate in a way that will help them understand what we say. Good communication is not me unloading what is on my mind, but me sacrificing to listen to the listener so that I know how to apply the truth in a helpful way.

Therefore, we conclude that the speaker communicating something helpful to the listener is only half the process. Well-rounded communication is the expression of good and truthful information by the speaker, and the acceptance of that truth by the listener. What good is truth communicated but not received? Can it have a positive effect on those who reject it? That was the essential principle Jesus taught in the parable of the Sower and the Seed.

Jesus sent out seventy of His followers with the most important truth in eternity, the truth about the kingdom of God. He taught the messengers that some folks would embrace what they said and there would be mutual blessing among them. Conversely, Jesus also taught that there would be some people who would reject the eternal message. It was not because the messenger didn't communicate it well enough or was not convincing enough. Rather, the listener, not seeing the importance of the message, would dismiss it out of hand and move on to sacrifice his or her life to passing things.

The point of Jesus's instruction in this text is that we better listen very carefully to what the messengers of Christ's truth say. They are not just backward, out-of-touch weirdos who bring an archaic and dubious message. They bring us the message that not

only endures for eternity, but impacts eternity for good or for evil. Embrace the message of the kingdom of God and rejoice that through faith God graciously puts your name in heaven's register. Reject the message of the gospel and you consign yourself to eternity in hell. If this message is true, and it is, your response to it is eternally significant.

Chosen Messengers of Christ (vv.1-12)

Jesus called seventy-two messengers to be laborers in His vineyard (vv.1-4). *After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go (v.1).* The opening words, "After this," refer to the events of chapter nine. As we said, those events marked the transition from Jesus's ministry in Galilee to this ministry in Judea as He was moving toward Jerusalem and the cross.

At the beginning of chapter nine (verse two), we read how Jesus sent out the twelve apostles to preach the kingdom of God and to heal and do miracles through His power. The verb in that statement was *apostello*, which means to send someone to a task carrying the sender's authority. Now we discover a second situation when Jesus sent out another seventy-two (or seventy depending on manuscript evidence). Notice that Jesus appointed those seventy followers to this particular task. The Greek word Luke used here means to put someone in a special position of responsibility. The messenger who carries the Lord's message is appointed to a special position indeed.

It is probably significant that Luke placed this event right in the record of John's confession about trying to stop someone from doing the work of Christ because they were not part of the "in" crowd. We must pause to wonder if the twelve apostles (the really close followers) were offended when Jesus picked seventy more to repeat the work they had done.

Jesus sent the seventy into *every town and place where he himself was about to go*. Some see Jesus's choosing and sending of the "70" as a veiled reference to the 70 nations of the world listed in Genesis 10. That would be a reference to roots of all the Gentile nations or groups. Eventually Jesus would send His messengers with the gospel into the Gentile regions, but not yet.

Here is a great picture of Jesus's desire for everyone who follows Him to be His messenger. We were not surprised that Jesus sent out the twelve with the message that the Kingdom of God was present. They were men of His special choosing. They had learned some very important truths about the King of the kingdom. But even those twelve apostles were for the most part ordinary men. Now there is this nondescript group of seventy followers who, if anything, were even more ordinary. It is a good reminder that the Lord does not choose us to declare His message because we are naturally talented or even because we are very determined communicators. The messenger is generally ordinary but the message is extra-ordinary.

Why did Jesus send those messengers to places where He planned to go Himself? Remember this is a pathway toward Jerusalem and the cross. He was on His way to accomplish the critical work necessary to complete the good news that the Kingdom of God was at hand. The "Kingdom of God" is the wonderfully Good News that God forgives confessed sin and draws the penitent sinner into fellowship with Him through the blood God the Son shed on the cross to pay the penalty for sin. This was the same message another forerunner John preached in the wilderness: "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2). Therefore, Jesus sent the messengers ahead so that even before the Savior arrived, the messengers did the preparatory work of revealing the line between those who would believe and those who would remain unbelievers.

The second verse begins the Lord's general descriptions of the position to which He appointed these seventy men. *And he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road" (vv.2-4).*

As the messengers traveled into the villages and cities they would see a harvest, that is, masses of people who needed the good news of salvation. The harvest was not masses of people clamoring to be saved, but masses of people who needed to hear the Good News. When the messengers saw this, they were to beg God to provide more workers. The harvest is indeed plentiful. But the harvest for the majority of people is the judgment of Christ in the last day.

That is what Jesus taught when He explained in the Kingdom parable, “*The harvest is the close of the age, and the reapers are angels*” (Matthew 13:39). Also in the last day, we read that the angel will command. “*Put in your sickle, and reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe*” (Revelation 14:15).

Do we ever stop to think about this harvest? Do we ever stop to consider who needs to hear the gospel? The greater portion of 7.7 billion people need to hear the Good News. Millions of people even in our own nation need to hear the Good News. Our friends, neighbors, and co-workers need to hear the Good News again because when they have heard it in the past, the news has often gone over their heads. Good News seems irrelevant and unnecessary where there is no conviction of sin.

Jesus promised that the messengers would see the harvest and would need to pray for the Lord of the harvest to send out more reapers. So how do we recruit more workers in the field? Do we need to have more enthusiastic Pep rallies that will attract potential missionaries? No. Maybe more movies and thrilling books about missions. No. It is possible that we could make more effective mission boards. Effective mission boards are important, but that is not the answer. What about more high-tech, Millennial savvy missions conferences? No. Should we focus on seminaries that emphasize the need for missions? That’s important, but “no.”

What did Jesus say was the solution to the need for more messengers to take the message of the Kingdom to the world? “*Pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send.*” The Lord is in charge of sending missionaries. That idea shows up in verse one where we learn it is the Lord who *appointed seventy-two others and sent them* (v.1). That is why we *pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers* (v.2). That same authority is discovered in the last part of verse seventeen where we hear the messengers testify, “*Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!*” (v.17b). That Lord of the harvest challenges us to pray seriously, fervently, begging God to send more workers. But maybe we fear to pray that way for fear God might send us.

The messengers would depend on the Lord to send more help, and, even more, they would depend wholly on the Lord for the supply of bare necessities. The Lord told them to *carry no moneybag, no*

knapsack, no sandals (v.4). And they had to depend on the Lord even for safe keeping because He was *sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves* (v.3).

And one more point about the messengers’ circumstances. They were to take no time for small talk. *And greet no one on the road* (v.4). The messengers’ mission required the person to be fully consumed with the Lord’s will and fully dependent on Him for life and health.

Furthermore, the Lord of the harvest gave instructions about sharing a blessing (vv.5-9). He sent out the messengers to build positive relationships. “*Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace be to this house!’ And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house. Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you*” (vv.5-8).

They were to begin building the positive relationship with a greeting. Imagine a perfect stranger walking up to your house, knocking on the door, and when you answer he says, “*Peace be to this house!*” This was the opening line to find someone who was receptive to the gospel. The receptive person would respond favorably to the gospel of peace. Why were some favorably predisposed and some were not? God pouring out His grace is the answer to that question.

Having found someone who was receptive to the gospel, the messenger was to stay and allow the recipient of God’s grace to share that grace by providing basic necessities. Basic care was the laborer’s wages. Notice he was not even to demand “kosher” food but was to eat whatever the host provided.

And the chief purpose for the messengers was to preach the kingdom of God. “*Heal the sick in it and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you’*” (v.9). Yes, like the twelve who went before them, these men were to heal the sick. The sign gift of healing was to attract people’s attention to the more important gift, the message of salvation. Healing the sick was an expression of the compassion of Christ. The news of salvation available by God’s grace through faith is a greater expression of Christ’s compassion.

But what if people don't want the expression of Christ's compassion? What if people are very satisfied to spend life pursuing passing things, the popular things?

Warnings to Hear Christ's Messengers (vv.10-16).

The Lord of the Harvest offered severe warnings for those who will not hear (vv.10-15). Jesus gave the messengers instruction about the testimony they were to level against the people who rejected the message. *"But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off against you'"* (vv.10-11a).

According to this instruction, the messengers were to demonstrate a town's rejection of the Good News. Not all the people in all the cities would be receptive to the gospel. Jesus Himself had just been rejected by an entire Samaritan town (Luke 9:53). Likewise most cultures as a whole in the world today reject the Good News. Granted, there are individuals within most cultures who do receive the gospel. But whole cities that respond to the gospel are rare. Though there are often stories coming from missionaries in remote parts of the world in which whole villages appear to embrace the gospel.

When the town as a whole rejected the gospel, the messengers were to do a public demonstration of their rejection. Shaking off the dust of the city was a common demonstration of rejection. The people rejected God's message, messenger, and ultimately a relationship with the Savior from sin. The messengers demonstrated publicly, "God has rejected a relationship with you."

Here is the critical issue. Jesus said of those who rejected His messengers, *"Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near"* (v.11b). The important issue is that sinners came face to face with the kingdom of God. They were confronted by the message of the kingdom, "There is salvation, entrance into God's kingdom, through Jesus Christ alone." Everyone is confronted by this truth at some point in some fashion. How we respond carries eternal consequences. This is the same principle God gave to Ezekiel who would be rejected out of hand by people who despised God. *"And*

whether they hear or refuse to hear (for they are a rebellious house) they will know that a prophet has been among them" (Ezekiel 2:5).

There was not only the messengers' testimony against those people, but there was also Divine testimony against them. Jesus promised that the towns that rejected the message would be judged. *"I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town"* (v.12). Throughout the Bible, God uses Sodom as the quintessential example of God's judgment against gross sin. But towns and people who reject the gospel are more hopeless than the city of Sodom.

Chorazin and Bethsaida would be judged. *"Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more bearable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you"* (vv.13-14). Chorazin was very near Capernaum, Jesus's adopted hometown. Bethsaida was hometown to Philip, Andrew, and Peter. Tyre and Sidon were two major Old Testament cities that epitomized sin and wickedness. If in Jesus's day you would have asked the typical Jew to name the most wicked cities in history, it is likely that these would have been at the top of their list.

But Jesus said the people of those cities would have repented if He had done the works there that He did in Chorazin and Bethsaida (which apparently rejected Jesus's message). So why didn't Jesus do that very thing? Sovereign wisdom.

The Lord also promised that Capernaum, of all places, would be judged. *"And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades"* (v.15). That was Jesus's hometown while He ministered in Galilee. The self-righteous Jews in Capernaum assumed they were heaven-ward bound. Jesus informed them that by rejecting Him, they were destined for hell.

The underlying principle for this judgment is stated in verse sixteen. *"The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me"* (v.16). A choice will be made about the message. Some will hear it and embrace it. Some will hear it and reject it. But the choice about receiving or rejecting the message is ultimately the choice about the Savior. It is not a preference for one religious teaching over all others.

Hearing the messenger with the gospel message is equivalent to hearing Jesus. To hear Jesus is to embrace Him by faith. Hear Him!

The Messengers' Joy (vv.17-20).

The messengers who went out, returned, ecstatic about Christ's work. *The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" (v.17).* They reported on what they did. No doubt their report included testimony of how people responded to the Kingdom message. Surely they talked about how people received them and cared for them. But most impressive was how the spirit world responded to the message.

The work was through Christ's name. *"Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" (v.17b).* A very important truth about the messengers' testimony is that they all realized that whatever good was accomplished was done through Christ's name. The name of Christ undergirds, empowers, infuses, permeates every aspect of His work. And so it should be because He is the authority over all good that flows out of His truth.

To that end, the Lord explained His authority (vv.18-20). First, He explained that He has authority over Satan's realm. *And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (v.18).* This is not a reference to the original fall of Satan. Rather we need to stop and consider that the context of this strange statement is about the great response to the kingdom message. The context is about Satan's power through demons being overcome time and again by the power of Christ's name. The imperfect tense verb "I was watching" indicates a continuing process in the past—also like lightening flashes in heaven that appear, disappear and appear, and disappear again and again. Therefore, in this statement, Jesus told the messengers that He observed the power of Satan being knocked down over and over as souls were being rescued for His kingdom.

Christ gives authority to His servants. *"Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you" (v.19).* What kind of authority is this? This is the power Jesus gives to all of us who trust in Him alone. This is what John wrote about. *Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is*

greater than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4). Not that we can literally walk on snakes and scorpions—what would be the point in that? Rather the power of Satan is personified in the poisonous, vicious creatures. We are as safe in our relationship with Jesus as the seventy messengers were.

Christ's authority should be a source of rejoicing for us. Especially because Christ, by His authority, places our names in heaven. *"Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (v.20).* This is the best cause for rejoicing. Only Jesus can write our names in the census of heavenly citizenship. He writes our names there with His blood. We are not like the millions who reject the Good News and are therefore liable for His judgment. By His wonderful grace He opened our spiritual eyes, caused us to see our sin, drew us to Himself where we confessed our sin and embraced Him by faith. That is plenty of cause for our rejoicing.