

Scripture Reading:

**Luke 10:1** “After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. **2** Then He said to them, "The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. **3** Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves. **4** Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals; and greet no one along the road. **5** But whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house.' **6** And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on it; if not, it will return to you. **7** And remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not go from house to house. **8** Whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you. **9** And heal the sick there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' **10** But whatever city you enter, and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, **11** 'The very dust of your city which clings to us we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near you.' **12** But I say to you that it will be more tolerable in that Day for Sodom than for that city. **13** "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. **14** But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. **15** And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades. **16** He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me."

# ***"12 Springs Watering the 70 Palm Trees"***

With the sermon title you may think that your pastor is going to wander off into numerology this morning, but let me assure you that such is not the case

- We are going to remember the context of where we are in Luke's orderly account and see how Jesus does use very familiar numbers to help the Saints see the big picture
- We are going to consider the great harvest that Jesus has placed before His Church and what it means for us today
- And finally, we are going to consider the sober warnings that Jesus proclaims against those who do not take God's covenant seriously!

When Luke begins the Book of Acts, he reminds his friend Theophilus of the final instructions that Jesus gave the Disciples before His Ascension:

**Acts 1:8 "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."**

Most of the Book of Acts is the history of how this is accomplished: Here, in an account that is unique to Luke, we see Jesus foreshadowing this mission as He prepares for His final journey to Jerusalem.

- At the beginning of chapter nine in Luke's Gospel, we saw Jesus commission the twelve to go by twos to the cities of Galilee.

Jesus has NOW set His face to go to Jerusalem at His appointed time and He has chosen to journey through Samaria as we saw last week.

- He now sends out seventy chosen men by twos "into every city and place where He Himself was about to go."

They are to proclaim that "The Kingdom of God has come near!" Since most, if not all of the places they are being sent are now in Samaria, this must have been a little strange and fearful, which is why we see them return with joy which we will consider more fully next week.

- What we don't want to miss here, and thus the sermon title, is the big picture...

Jesus, the Son of God saves His people from their sins. He will ascend in power to reign at God's right-hand and His Church will take the Gospel to the whole world starting at Jerusalem, moving out to all of Judea, then to Samaria and finally to the ends of the earth.

**As we studied a few weeks ago this was pictured as the people of God stopped at Elim where they saw twelve springs of water giving life to seventy palm trees.**

**The twelve tribes were to minister to the seventy nations of the earth.**

- **The Disciples will understand this more fully after the Holy Spirit is poured out at Pentecost, then in Samaria and finally upon the Gentiles.**

**So, what we should not miss here is that Jesus sends His twelve to the twelve tribes, the people of Israel and now He sends the seventy to Samaritans foreshadowing the Great Commission**

- **This is wonderful picture and along with it come some important practical lessons for us today!**

**Jesus tells them to pray for workers to go out and harvest the fields...**

- **We should quickly note Jesus does NOT tell the Disciples to go out and PRODUCE the harvest...**

**That is God's job, and we as His laborers are to go and gather the fruit of His effectual work which produces a bountiful harvest!**

**Jesus tells them to "pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers"**

**Prayer must be at the center of our effort to carry out the Great Commission**

**As we consider doing our part we all have varying amounts of...**

**-- money or wealth**

**-- Intellect or knowledge**

**-- Talent or ability**

**BUT we can ALL pray... And sadly, this is the one place where we most often fail!**

**As Jesus sends out His messengers, He says they are sent out as "lambs among wolves."**

- **Wolves and lambs are clearly NOT compatible and yet how close we as His lambs today allow ourselves to be with these wolves!**

**We must not take comfort from the world... This is an important lesson for us ALL to learn and remember, because as Martin Luther points out, "Cain will murder Abel, if he can to the very end of the world." This is a hard lesson that each generation must learn and in many ways we continue to learn for our entire Christian life.**

- **We should notice also, from our text, that even good things like money, protection and common courtesies can distract us from the work of the Kingdom**

**The Lord's work often involves money as we saw with large offerings taken in the Old Testament and the tithes & gifts we present each week. We need basic provisions like coats and shoes, and Paul even says that someone who does not provide for his family is worse than an infidel. And certainly Christians are to be courteous and friendly**

- **But the question we must constantly ask is are we allowing these things to become the focus of our lives and also whether they are diverting too much of our attention when critical work for the Kingdom needs to be done.**

**Again, these are hard lessons that we each must learn to apply in our lives wherever the Lord has placed us and continue to learn along the way**

- **The Lord then explains how the messengers would be received and how they were to respond**

**Some would receive the Good News with great joy offering the disciples hospitality that they were to accept. These cities would be blessed with the healing of their sick and the encouraging words, "The Kingdom of God has come near to you!"**

**There would also be cities which would NOT receive the Good News and the disciples were told to "go out into its streets and say, 'The very dust of your city which clings to us we wipe off against you.'"**

- **Please note that they were NOT instructed to make their message more relevant or even to try and be better understood!**

**However, they were told to also tell those who reject them, "Nevertheless know this, that the Kingdom of God has come near you."**

- **The same statement of fact is made to BOTH groups...**

**Paul explains this to the Saints at Corinth after telling them that God always leads us in triumph in Christ: "15 We are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved AND among those who are perishing.**

**16 To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life."**

**A response of life versus a response of death:**

- **The two paths that we often focus on here in Luke and throughout all of the Scriptures**
  - ⇒ **The wheat & tares**
  - ⇒ **The sheep and the goats**
  - ⇒ **The righteous & the wicked**
  - ⇒ **The bride and the harlot**

- **Jesus goes on to make some astounding comparisons which help the Disciples, AND US, to better understand the consequences of these choices.**

**Jesus says of those who reject His messengers: “that it will be more tolerable in that Day for Sodom than for that city.” That must have shocked those Disciples: Sodom was THE O.T. picture of judgment pouring down. Jesus then reflects on the rejection He received by the cities of Galilee and this would have shocked these Disciples even more... Jesus pronounces woes on Chorazin and Bethsaida where He had ministered saying, “if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago.”**

**Think about the contrast being made here: Cities of Israel compared to pagan Gentile cities... Jesus then turns to what may have been His own hometown, saying of Capernaum, “you who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades.” [implies REAL judgment]**

- **How can these back-sliden cities of Samaria be worse off than Sodom?**
- **How can these cities of Israel be worse off than pagan, sinful Gentile cities?**

**Pondering these questions will cause us to deal with a couple of major misconceptions we have in Christendom today, especially here in America...**

- 1) Our failure to see importance of God’s Covenant**
- 2) The attitude that all sin is equally offensive to God**

**Let me briefly deal with the second problem – The Bible clearly teaches, and we here at Church of the King believe, that ALL sin, big or small, separates us from God**

**The Bible also teaches, and WE believe, that the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus pays the full penalty for ALL sin no matter how great or small...**

**Sadly this has led to an erroneous conclusion that ALL sin is equal, but there are two problems with this:**

- 1) As we see from this morning’s lesson, it is NOT Biblical**
- 2) Such thinking almost certainly sets a path toward very grievous sins... As I seek God’s forgiveness of my daily sins of omission and commission, I will find myself tempted to engage in greater and greater sin thinking it is all the same**

- **The fact that Jesus here makes such startling comparisons should jolt us out of such thinking!**

**However, we must also see that as Jesus makes these comparisons, we come face to face with the other problem of wrongly understanding God’s Covenant...**

**Consider again what Jesus compares:**

**Samaritan cities versus Sodom**

**Jewish cities v. Gentile pagans**

**What sin or sins have these cities committed to rival the notorious sins of Sodom, Tyre or Sidon? The sin is unbelief: J.C. Ryle put it well as he comments on these verses: “Let us lay these things to heart, and beware of unbelief. It is not open sin and flagrant excesses alone which ruin souls. We have only to sit still and do nothing, when the Gospel is pressed on our acceptance, and we should find ourselves one day in the pit. We need not run into any excess of riot. We need not openly oppose true religion. We have only to remain cold, careless, indifferent, unmoved, and unaffected, and our end will be in hell. This was the ruin of Chorazin and Bethsaida. And this, it may be feared, will be the ruin of thousands as long as the world stands. No sin makes less noise, but none so surely damns the soul, as unbelief”**

- **BUT we can rightly ask: Are not the cities of Sodom, Tyre and Sidon ALSO guilty of unbelief?**

**YES and that leaves us with ONLY one very important conclusion...**

- **The people who are in God’s Covenant community are held to a higher standard**
- **And in the case of the Samaritan cities even those who have fallen away from God’s covenant**

**This is why the attitude that all sin is the same in God’s eyes is such a problem: We can miss the importance of what Jesus is teaching here. Let me offer a practical example from some current headlines... Who, in God’s eyes comes under the greater judgment for the sin of adultery: Governor Spitzer who used government resources to purchase his pleasure with harlots and has been denounced as a hypocrite? Or Ted Haggard, the former pastor of New Life Church in Colorado Springs who violated his marriage vows with a male prostitute?**

**BOTH can certainly be forgiven by the blood of Christ, but a minister in Christ’s Church is held to a higher standard, just as these covenant cities were held to a higher standard: They carried in their flesh the sign of God’s Covenant: They were under the blessings and curses given by Moses in Deuteronomy as the people entered God’s promise land.**

**The lesson is pretty simple:**

**God’s people are held to a higher standard**

**We are held to a higher standard!**

**Our children are held to a higher standard...**

**This is why we baptize them and feed them at the Lord’s Table**

**This is why we rejoice when a new young family takes their membership vows as the Pettyjohns will do Lord-willing, next week!**

**We bring our children to God trusting that He will greatly bless them with His gracious salvation and pour out His blessings on them**

**Isaiah will bring his family knowing that true joy and rich blessings lie in the community of God's people**

**In BOTH cases we know that being a member of God's Covenant and communing with God's people will call us to a higher standard: Rich blessings are matched with severe warnings: Just like in Deuteronomy**

**After warning Capernaum that they will be brought down to Hades, Jesus then gives His messengers this final instruction which we need to hear today:**

**“He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent me.”**

**It might be easy for us to say, YES, those people in Capernaum had Jesus right there with them, how dare they reject Him... But Jesus says it will be no different for those who reject His messengers**

**Great blessings and sobering curses are offered as the seventy go out to proclaim that the Kingdom has come near**

**Today, these same blessings and curses are offered as the officers of Christ's Church minister throughout the world:**

**We offer the Gospel, the Good News and those who receive it are greatly blessed both here and for eternity. When we hear a minister in Christ's Church declare that our sins are forgiven, we can KNOW that they are forgiven and we are filled with great joy, knowing that our names are written in heaven. When those who minister in Christ's name call us to obedience or warn us against a path of sin, this same principle applies:**

- **We can hear them and thus hear Jesus Himself, or we can reject them which means we reject Jesus and put ourselves in danger of hell fire.**
- **We are God's people and as such WE are called to a higher standard.**
- **Our standard is the example of Jesus, the Son of God and the instructions from God's Word**
- **We do not look at the standards or examples of the world around us and say we are doing OK!**

**May God grant Church of the King the grace to hear and welcome Jesus knowing and living the comforting promise of Romans 8:**

**“1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.**