

Luke 10.1-24

“The Fall of the Mighty and the Exaltation of the Lowly”

How the mighty have fallen.... A lot of great stories are sort of centered around this theme, aren't they? Think about stories like *The Lord of the Rings*. Or *Harry Potter*.

In order for good to prevail in the world, a great evil has to be overthrown first. And so, a nearly invincible *foe* eventually winds up being destroyed against all odds because of the persistence of an unlikely hero and his friends. And once that happens, there's *peace* for all.

Well, it's no coincidence that so many stories have that theme, because there's something deep within the heart of human beings that knows that story is really true. There's a *great evil* in *our* world. And the only way peace can prevail is for that evil to be overthrown.

I want you to think about that as we consider today the first part of Luke ch. 10, where Jesus sends out these 72 disciples who go before him healing and casting out demons. And when they come back, Jesus says to them, *“I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.”*

How the mighty will fall! As *King Jesus* is *casting out* the Kingdom of Satan that holds sway over the race of men.

1. Jesus Sends the 72 (verses 1-11)

Now, in verse 51 of chapter 9, Luke just told us that Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem to fulfill his mission to be crucified. And so, he sent messengers before him into the region of Samaria. And then he began his journey south to get to Jerusalem.

And now, just like he did at the beginning of chapter 9, here at the beginning of chapter 10 Jesus sends out messengers and gives them power to heal and cast out demons.

But there are some important differences between the beginning of chapter 9 and chapter 10. For instance, in ch. 9 Jesus only sent out the *12 apostles* to go around Galilee.

But here in ch. 10 he sends out 72 *disciples* specifically to prepare the way for his journey through Samaria.... Verse 1 says he, “*sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.*”

And Jesus has some pretty interesting things to say here to this group of 72 that he didn’t say to the 12 in ch. 9.

Verse 2: “*The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.*”

And verse 3: “*I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.*”

All of these things together indicate the shift that took place at the end of chapter 9. As Jesus is no longer simply engaged in an itinerant ministry around Galilee. But he’s now *set his face* to go to Jerusalem to die.

And so, he’s sending out more of his disciples—41 groups of two, to be exact—to prepare the way for him as he goes down to Jerusalem.

And as he sends these 72, he *tells* them about the harvest and the need for more workers. And he *warns* them that they’ll face opposition—they’re like lambs amidst wolves.

And then he gives them this list of instructions in verses 4-11.

First, He tells them in verse 4, “*Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.*”

In other words, they’re to go in haste and trusting in God’s provision for the journey. Because the mission is urgent—the time has come for Jesus to make his journey to Jerusalem.

Second, he tells them in verses 5 and 6 that when they enter a house, they’re to say, “*Peace be to this house. And if a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you.*”

What he’s saying here is that they’re to say a blessing of peace upon any house they enter. But *if* they get to a house that’s not occupied by children of God’s Kingdom, then the blessing will be nullified.

But then, in verse 7 he tells them that either way, they're to eat and drink what's provided in the house that receives them. Because the laborer deserves his wages. So, they'll be reliant on the hospitality of other people.

And for the towns that welcome them, they're to stay there and heal and proclaim that the Kingdom of God has come near.

But there will also be towns that reject them. And for these towns that reject them, Jesus tells them to, *"Go into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God is near.'"*

Now, Jesus was himself just rejected by a Samaritan town back in chapter 9.... And what did James and John want to do? They wanted to call down fire from heaven and destroy the town.

But here, Jesus gives these 72 *instructions* on what they're to do if they're rejected. They're *not* to call fire down from heaven. But they're to just go into the street, shake the dust from off their feet, and proclaim that the Kingdom of God has come near.

You see, these 72 messengers are like prophets going before the Lord to herald the coming of God's Kingdom. And like all prophets, one of the things they have to do is warn people of the coming judgment whether or not they receive the message.

And our calling as the church is the same as this. We're to proclaim the gospel. And there will be some who accept it, and others who reject it. But the message is the same either way—God's Kingdom has come in Jesus Christ. And the *result* doesn't affect the calling to share the message.

And that message about the Kingdom is good news. It's the gospel. But, you see, the good news brings bad results for people who reject it. And it doesn't do anything to say, *"I don't think that's true."* Because saying you *don't think* it's true doesn't affect one bit the fact that it *is true!*

2. The Mighty Will Fall (verses 12-16)

And that's why Jesus goes on, starting in verse 12, to talk about the coming judgment. Because the kingdom has come near in Him! And judgment is coming, whether we like it or not.

And that's also why he *says* the Day of Judgment will even be more bearable for Sodom—that most debased of cities—than it will be for those cities that reject the message of Jesus and his disciples.

Because in the days of Sodom the kingdom of God wasn't near. Sodom never had the Son of God himself in its midst healing, casting out demons, and proclaiming the gospel.

But the case was different for these cities that were visited by Jesus—Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum.... Capernaum was the place where he healed the *Centurion's servant* in chapter 7. And it was at Bethsaida that he *fed the 5000* with 5 loaves and 2 fish in chapter 9.

And sure, the people in those cities marveled at Jesus' works. They witnessed the presence of the Kingdom. *But they didn't repent!* And *that* was the problem.

And because of that.... Because these cities *didn't repent* even when they saw the mighty works of the Messiah, Jesus says the Day of Judgment will be even more bearable for cities like Sodom, Tyre, and Sidon—those pagan cities that were enemies of God and his people.

Now, way back in 1.52, Mary sang in her song that the Lord "*has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate.*"

And in light of that, notice specifically the indictment against Capernaum in verse 15: "*And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths.*"

You see, the people in Capernaum apparently had a pretty high opinion of themselves. They thought their city would be exalted to the heavens. But Jesus makes it clear that any human city that rejects him—*no matter* how glorious—will be brought down from its high place.

And so, contrary to their presumptions, Capernaum *will not* be exalted to heaven. No. In the Day of Judgment, it will in fact be brought down to the depths.

Because, as we'll see in a few verses, Satan—the one who holds sway over the cities of man that oppose God's purposes—is in the process of being cast down himself. And as long as Capernaum and the other cities refuse to repent, they'll be torn down with him.

But we also shouldn't miss the Lord's mercy here. Because that Day of final judgment still hasn't come.... *And why?.... Why* is it that the Lord has held off as long as he has in bringing the Day of Judgment?

Well, Peter tells us that it's because of his kindness—he wants his people to come to repentance.... 2 Peter 3:9: *"The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."*

So, we shouldn't miss that there's mercy *even* in how the Lord brings judgment.

And the key statement here for the 72 is verse 16: *"He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me."*

So, you sort of have this chain of command—the Father sends Jesus his Son. And Jesus sends his disciples. And because of that, to receive the word of Christ's disciples is to receive the word of Christ. And to receive the word of Christ is to receive the word of the Father.

And while it might be easy to just pass over the part where Jesus pronounces woe on ancient cities, it gets *a lot* more personal when you get to, *"the one who rejects you rejects me,"* doesn't it?

You see, the call to repent upon hearing the gospel isn't just for first century cities. It's for individuals. And it's for each of us sitting in this room today!

Friends, the Day of Judgment hasn't come yet. But it *is coming*. And I'm here today declaring to you this message that the Kingdom of God has

come near to us in the person of Jesus Christ..... Don't just pass over that message! *It's true*. The Kingdom of God has come.

So, *where are you?* How's your hearing? Do you *believe* this message that Jesus is Lord? Or *are you* rejecting it? *Are you* resisting the call to repent and believe in the Gospel? Don't resist any longer if you are—*believe* and you'll be saved!

3. The 72 Return to Jesus (verses 17-20)

Well, then in verse 17 we see that the 72 come back to Jesus and report success! "*Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!*"

But Jesus' response is a little unexpected, isn't it? What does he say? *O, that's great guys! Good job!... No!.... "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you."*

He's not surprised at all—"I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning." *This* is the real enemy Jesus is casting out. *This* is who he came to destroy. Not the cities of mankind, but the devil and *his kingdom* that sits behind all cities of man that are opposed to God and his people.

And so, while the group of 72 were going around preaching, healing, and casting out demons, Jesus had this *prophetic vision* of Satan's downfall.

You sort of have this picture like a TV with a split screen. On the one side it's the 72 going around casting out demons. And on the other side it's the spiritual reality behind the scenes, as Jesus sees Satan fall from heaven.

And *what's the point?* Well, the point is that the kingdom of Satan is being *cast out!* / Christ and *his kingdom* is *pushing* it out. But then, the obvious question is, *When?... Past?... Present?... Future?...* Answer = Yes.

You see, Satan was *judged first* at the death and resurrection of Christ. As Paul tells us in Colossians 2.15, God "*disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in Christ.*"

And the fact that demons were being cast out all over the place during Jesus' earthly ministry indicated that the time of their judgment was at hand.

Nevertheless, the *final* judgment is still future. And so, Jesus' vision here in Luke 10 of Satan falling from heaven is prophetic. He *has fallen*, and he *will yet fall*.

And so, we have to always remember, *brothers and sisters*, that we're all engaged in a spiritual battle every day. As Paul says in Ephesians 6, "*our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*"

We can tend to forget that because we generally don't see demons running around all over the place.

But there are forces at work in the world that are opposed to God that we can't see with our physical eyes. And we have to keep that in mind when we look to the Lord in prayer as we seek to serve him in our lives.

But also, *don't forget* that *if* you're united to Christ by faith there's nothing the enemy can do to you. Because Jesus has already won the war! And so, he's been given *all authority* in heaven and on earth. And he's given that authority to his church.

And that's how Paul can say in Romans 16.20 that *the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet....* Satan has been defeated. The only thing that remains for his final casting out of the world once and for all is the Last Judgment when he'll be thrown into the Lake of Fire for good.

Satan is the Accuser. He's the Tempter. And he wants to see you fall. But *he's* the one who's fallen. And *if* you abide in Christ by the Holy Spirit, then the God of peace will soon crush him under your feet.

Nevertheless, Jesus goes on to say in verse 20, "*do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you. Rejoice that your names are written in heaven.*"

Now, back in chapter 9, the apostles showed their arrogance as they argued about who'd be the greatest among them. And ever since then Jesus has been trying to set them straight ever since then.

And here, he tells this group of 72 that the thing they're to be most thankful for—the thing they're to focus on—*is not* that they have power, but that their names are written in heaven.

In other words, instead of fixating on the authority they have, they're to remember what they are apart from Christ—sinful, sick, without hope. But *accepted* in God's Kingdom because of the mercy of Jesus.

Because *that's* the greatest miracle of all!... You *want blessings?* You *want miracles!*? Then *look* at what God has done for you in Jesus!

Consider what Jesus did in dying for you and rising from the dead so that *you* could be forgiven and have new life in him. And contemplate the *amazing reality* that your name is written in heaven!

I mean, we can tend to fixate on a lot of things besides that, *can't we?* Because the Lord is good to us and he blesses us with a lot of things in addition to our eternal salvation—victory over sin, understanding of his word, times when we can *really sense* his presence.

But above all that is the fact that your name has been *lifted up* to heaven because the Lord Jesus has come and *torn down* the Kingdom of the Devil and you're now seated with Christ in the heavenly places.

And that reality is true whether you're in a time of great power in your walk with the Lord or in a time of great weakness.

So, rejoice! And don't ever forget, *brothers and sisters*, that the most glorious reality of the Christian life from beginning to end is always, "*Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.*"

Remember the apostles arguing about who's the greatest back in chapter 9. They got fixated on the power Jesus gave them and they forgot what the Kingdom of God is really all about.

And what did Jesus do? Well, he showed them what the Kingdom was really all about by taking a little child, and telling them, "*Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me.*"

Remind you of anything?... That's almost exactly what Jesus just said here in chapter 10 verse 16 to the 72, *isn't it?*

4. The Lowly Are Lifted Up (verses 21-24)

And in light of that, it's no coincidence that Jesus goes on in verse 21 to pray a prayer that reminds these 72 that they're just little children:

At that time Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.

Friends, Jesus rejoices that the Father has revealed the Kingdom to such as us. To little children. To the foolish of the world.

And so, while the haughty cities of the world—and Satan himself—will be thrown down, the little children of God's Kingdom will be raised up. This is the great reversal the coming of God's Kingdom brings.

A crucified man is King! And he gives his kingdom to little children. But those who *seem* to have *all* the wisdom and *all* the power and *all* the wealth are brought down and left empty.

Verse 22, "*All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.*"

Of course, a whole lot of people saw and heard Jesus with their *physical* eyes and ears. And some people followed him. While others rejected him. But it's those to whom the truth is revealed who follow.

And Jesus makes the point here in the strongest of terms that we're entirely dependent on him. Elsewhere he says, "*No one comes to the Father but through me.*" But here, he *even* goes so far as to say, "*No one knows who the Father is except those to whom I choose to reveal him.*"

You see, he *completely strips away* any pretense to pride we might have. *Any way of saying, "I figured it out myself" No.... That's entirely excluded.* In reality, it's Jesus and *Jesus alone* who reveals God to us.

And so, we're *utterly dependent* on Christ, *both* as the way to the Father *and* as the one who grants that we come to know the Father.

And this *isn't* just some abstract theological doctrine. It's very personal. It should take root in each of our hearts. And we see that in what Jesus says next in verses 23-24:

"Then he turned to his disciples and said privately, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it."

Don't ever take that for granted. God has blessed us to see that Jesus came to drive out Satan, sin, and death. Even the righteous prophets of old longed to see this, but didn't because they lived before Christ came.

But we see it! The coming of Jesus the Messiah is the fulfillment of the hope of all the ages. And God has placed you in *this* time and place that you might see it—*not because* you're wise and understanding. But exactly the opposite. And it's all because of his mercy and grace!

And so, in light of this, what sort of *people* ought we to be?.... *If you believe in Jesus today, it's because he's defeated* Satan, sin, and death and opened your eyes to who he is *so that* your name might be written in heaven.

And his calling for you now as his disciple is that you'd go out into the world in his name and by his authority and declare wherever you go that God's Kingdom is at hand, *both* in how you live *and* in what you say.

Because, *brothers and sisters*, just like the 72 in Luke 10 we're all heralds of God's Kingdom, entrusted with this prophetic message that Jesus our hero has *torn down* the kingdom of darkness by his death and resurrection.

And the cities of the world may continue on in pride and reject the message. But that doesn't matter. We're *still* to proclaim the word. We're *still* to reach out to everyone we come in contact with in the love of Christ.

And so, may the Lord use us as lights shining in a dark place, until he comes again to set the world to rights once and for all.