

Luke 10:1-20

“A Reason To Rejoice”

As a child crying and wailing over an insignificant or superficial matter I could always count on those faithful words from my father, “Quit your crying or else I’ll give you something to cry about!” (Compassionate man) 😊 Well, that’s not what our passage is about today; in reality it's the polar opposite. The disciples of Jesus were rejoicing. But Jesus wouldn't really validate the reason they chose to rejoice; (their reason though not insignificant was superficial compared where their focus *should have been* and where their joy should be *stemming from*).

Jesus wants to give us a reason to rejoice! Something that in a world of darkness, hopelessness; depression and despair we could all use: the reason? Luke Ch 10 beginning in Vs 1.

Vs1

“After these things”: after what things? After Jesus explained to them the key to achieving greatness in God’s kingdom, after He acknowledged and ok’d the fact that not everyone has to do things the way we do or be a part of our group to be legitimate laborers for the kingdom of God. After He reminded them that He didn’t come here to destroy men’s lives but to save them (that there was no need to smoke a Samaritan city on His behalf) and after He encouraged a # of people to count the cost of discipleship, committing wholeheartedly making Him their priority...

“After *these* things” the Lord appointed 70 others and sent them 2 by 2 before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go.

Ok, few things here straight out of the gate. The question comes up; “Why 70?” The answer is, “We don’t know”. There’s speculation; did it correlate with the 70 elders of ancient Israel (Num 11)? Perhaps the current Sanhedrin and leaders of the nation? Was it sending the signal that spoke to the 70 nations from which mankind stemmed from found in Genesis Ch 10? We don’t know; I’d like to think that it was in regards to the Genesis account in that initially Jesus sent out the 12 (which correlates to the 12 tribes of Israel); then He sends out an additional 70 which would speak of God’s heart to reach all the Gentile nations as well.

If in fact that was the heart behind it than we have embodied in what's happening here the fact that God so loved *the world*, He gave His only begotten Son for both Jews and Gentiles alike. Again whether or not that's the specific reason we just don't know with certainty.

Of course He sent them out in pairs for the sake of accountability, safety and to have eye witness accounts embedded into each of their ministries.

But here's what I want you to see; time was closing in on Jesus, the shadow of the cross was starting to loom over Him.

There was still a whole lot to do; myriads of people who needed to hear that the kingdom of God was upon them yet there wasn't much time and Jesus couldn't be in more than one place at one time. There was a greater need physically than what He could accomplish practically. When Jesus took it upon Himself to enter into humanity, He laid aside temporarily His ability to be everywhere at one time. Now Jesus dwells in you, He dwells in me; He's everywhere, in all places at all times through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. But while He was ministering on the earth physically He laid aside that ability temporarily, so here's what He did. He multiplied Himself through making disciples of Himself and commissioned them to go before Him and prepare the way *for* Him, to share the good news of the kingdom of God on behalf *of* Him.

He was facilitating and delegating ministry. Now here in-lies a great principle for you and me to glean from; if the Lord Himself saw the wisdom in delegating the work, in raising people up, pouring into their lives and turning them loose on His behalf to get things done in both an expedient and efficient manner, how much more does that same principle apply to you and me? Some people have the mentality that they've got to do everything themselves and if they entrust the work to anyone else it will suffer in some way or not be as good as it could be if they would just tend to in personally.

Even though I can appreciate someone's heart in wanting something to be the very best in can be in their eyes the fact of the matter is that if *anyone* had a legitimate persuasion that if they were to let someone else do it, it wouldn't be as good as it could if *they* did it, it would be Jesus. Yet Jesus realized that there was wisdom in equipping others, and *committing* to others the work that needed to get done.

The fact of the matter is that people who horde their ministries, and/or their responsibilities for fear of something suffering are (listen) ministry murderers. In the name of making sure it gets done right, all kinds of things suffer, people get offended, different areas slip and all kinds of things are left undone because they just won't pour into other people and release responsibilities into their hands. Let's learn the lesson from our Lord; delegation, facilitation, appoint others to the work and let God use their lives. Will He use them exactly like He'll use you? No; is there a learning curve, mistakes to be made, things to tend to? Yes, it's called discipleship; don't rob people from the blessing of letting God use their life. Someone appointed *you* to a task, thank God they didn't horde that area to themselves, now you appoint someone else to a task; raise people up, and send them out into that area that you yourself are ministering in.

That's what Jesus did; we don't even know their names; they go down in historical anonymity yet Jesus used them powerfully. You don't have to be in the "Who's who" to be used of God. As a matter of fact it's better if you're in the "Who's he?"

Because then there's no questions, God gets all the glory. Now when it comes to a trade people are often miserly with their trade, don't like to train people too much because it's potentially detrimental for them to have others out there who can do the work. Not so in the ministry; there's plenty of work to be done, no lack of demand. It's there in Vs 49-50 of our previous Ch. Jesus taught us that we ought not be *forbidding* ministry, we should be *facilitating* ministry. The harvest is great, plenty of people to be saved, to be discipled and cultivated in Christ; praise God if He affords you the platform to speak into people's lives helping to shape them spiritually that they might be equipped to serve and bring God glory. Encourage people, equip people, give them responsibility and allow them to labor diligently in the harvest. We need all the servants we can get, notice.

Vs 2

Jesus is saying, “Listen, the work that needs done is overwhelming; but the people who are actually willing to work are few. Therefore pray...” Now it doesn’t come across so much in the translation but there is a sense of urgency throughout this passage. Harvest time is a limited window of opportunity. When the fields are ready for harvest you’ve got to get on it, you’ve got to be diligent and you’ve got to stay focused or you’ll lose it; you won’t get to all of it before it’s too late.

Here Jesus is saying, “The harvest time for humanity is upon us and there is a limited window of time in which we have to work and the amount of work that needs done is staggering.” 2 things that need to happen as a result of that; #1 We need to pray; we need to pray that God would raise up and send out laborers into His harvest. It’s been said that we can do more than pray *after* we pray, but we can’t do *anything until* we’ve prayed. Prayer is the #1 priority. So #1 We should cry out to God that He will raise up and send out laborers. But meanwhile (as we’ll see directly) we’re not to be standing around idly doing nothing, we’re to be busy about working ourselves. We need to be busy about our Masters business; there’s a lot to do and only a little time to do it in. It’s not going to get done if we’re just standing around goofing off. You see there’s an urgency here; it’s what Paul was talking about when he said, “*See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*” Eph 5:15-16 There’s urgency involved in what we do as believers in getting out the message of the gospel.

Vs 3-7

Ok, Jesus says, “Go your way”. Here’s what we need to see, they didn’t go until they were sent; Jesus is the One who calls us and Jesus is the One who *commissions* us. But the order is always the same, 1st the call, *then* the commission. But Jesus will never only *call* you, He will always in some way *commission* you. He has a plan for us, a purpose for which He’s called us and it’s not to sit on the sidelines and cheer others on but it’s to get down on the field and enter in (in some way) to the work.

Maybe you're thinking, "What's His plan for me?" I don't know, what's He have you praying for? It's interesting that in Vs 2 Jesus got them praying for laborers and then in Vs 3 He sent *them* out to labor. I have discovered that when the Lord begins to place something on your heart/my heart to pray about, many times (not every time) many times it's because He wants to use you/me instrumentally in that purpose for which we're praying. If you're praying for the children's ministry (or youth group) passionately/persistently it's just on your heart that God would meet their needs and do great things for those kids, the odds of God calling you to serve in that capacity and help meet those needs are pretty high. If you like order and you're praying for the ushers/greeters...worship team...or whatever, maybe your passion is centered on and focused around being the most godly mom/wife you can be for your family. It's a tremendous calling (now don't use things like that as a cloak to avoid serving the body, but you get the idea). God works *in* you, then He works *through* you; to will and to do for His good pleasure (Phil 2:13).

Now let's make a few observations about the nature of their calling. #1 We note in Vs 3 they could go out with *Authority/Confidently*; Jesus was behind them personally. He said, "*I send* (lit. thrust, it's urgent) *you out*." Jesus was backing their ministry. #2 They were sent in *Humility* (as lambs) yet Jesus made sure they were aware of the inherent danger; which is #3 He informed them *Realistically*. He didn't make it out to be an "ivory tower experience" He said, you're to go as lambs (in humility) but make no mistake you're being sent out among wolves realistically. #4 They were to travel *Lightly* (no money bag, backpack, extra sandals or whatever) they weren't be encumbered materialistically and bogged down by the things of this world. They were to trust that God would take care of them and meet their needs. 5^{thly}, again we note that He called them with a sense of *Urgency*; don't even take the time to go through the tedious, elaborate eastern greetings, but rather what you do, do quickly. The idea being to stay focused on the task at hand. 6^{thly}, finally they were to receive people's hospitality and not perceive it as charity because (Jesus said) the laborer is worthy of his wages. When people extend hospitality/generosity to you (Jesus says to them) consider it part of your compensation package from the hand of God. He's looking out for you and will move on people's lives to bless, tend to and encourage you.

In Vs 5 He speaks to the message that we're to bring; it's a message of peace. The gospel is *good news* God is seeking peace with man; God is seeking to reconcile mankind to Himself through the cross of Jesus Christ Jesus makes it clear that it will become clear real fast if people will receive it peaceably or reject it decisively.

Vs8

Jesus gives the instruction concerning the "Missionary stomach."

If someone sets it in front of you; eat it. If they're extending hospitality to you, return the common courtesy to them; don't be offending people by refusing to eat what they provide for you. Let's just say it, not everyone can cook... ☺ and different cultures eat different foods. Don't turn your nose up and say, "Uh, if I eat this I might throw up." Just pray over it and do your best to pound it down. You want to minister to these people, don't close the door through offending them because you refuse to eat their food. If they put it in front of you...eat it.

I'll never forget the time we were in Nigeria and they were cooking us chicken (or mostly chicken) in some sort of BBQ looking (but not tasting) sauce. We were eating the chicken and I noticed Russ pull a leg out of the mix and start eating it, after he got a few bites down I said to him, "Hey Russ, that's a little big to be a chicken leg don't ya think?" He slowly pulled it from his mouth to observe what was in his hands...I'm not sure what it was, they called it bush meat which boils down to some sort of giant jungle rodent. It was one of the funniest things I've ever seen but guess what...he ate it.

Vs9-12

You can either receive God's justification (by grace through faith) or you can fall under God's condemnation, but there is no in between. Jesus extends the offer of peace; reconciliation, He demonstrates genuine consideration/compassion toward our needs, but if we refuse to receive Him there's nothing left in our rejection of Him outside of judgment.

The kingdom of God has come near to you; that is, it's with in your grasp, you can receive Christ and have peace with God (the forgiveness of sins). But know this, there are eternal consequences to rejecting Christ. Now Jesus never employed "Hell-fire" preaching to try and frighten people; but He was very honest with people regarding the eternal consequences of rejecting Him. It wasn't a threat, it was a warning based out of love.

Now once the message had been proclaimed, the messenger was absolved of any further responsibility. The hearers salvation/condemnation wasn't based upon the one proclaiming the message, but the one *hearing* the message. It's not my responsibility to be "successful" (in regard to decisions made for Christ, mega church or whatever) it's my responsibility (and yours I might add) to be *faithful*. Not everyone will receive the message...

Vs 12-15

Jesus mentions 3 notoriously sinful cities that received God's judgment and compares them to 3 cities in His day who would receive *greater* judgment because of their refusal to receive Christ. What's the point? To whom much is given much more will be required. The more you know *about* Christ, the greater opportunity extended to you *through* Christ will result in greater judgment should you choose to *reject* Christ.

We're accountable for the light that's shed upon us; the greater the light, the greater the accountability. When Jesus says things like, "It will be more tolerable for them than for you" what He's affirming to us is that there are varying degrees of punishment in the pit, and those degrees of judgment correlate with the revelation and opportunity for salvation/reconciliation to God that have been extended to you.

These cities that Jesus mentioned were witness to incredible things that took place in the life of Christ; miracles, Christ opening the scriptures *to* them, making opportunity *for* them to come to Him; things that these other places never had. Yet they chose to reject Him. Now we don't know what Chorazin witnessed because the bible doesn't say. This is one way we know that the gospels are merely sketches of the life of Christ. John tells us that there's no way to record all that Christ did (John 21:25); but evidently whatever happened there it was significant because Jesus goes on record with regard the judgment that was coming their way.

Vs16

Again we note that Jesus and the Father are a package deal, you can't believe in God and reject Jesus; they're one. Jesus extends that same kind of principle to us; what we do, we do in His name, when someone rejects the gospel you give to them, they reject the Lord; if they receive it, they're receiving the Lord.

Vs17-19

These guys are topped out and understandably so. Jesus didn't say anything about power over demons in His name when He sent them out so this is more than they anticipated (which is always what Jesus does, more than we anticipate). Jesus says, "That's awesome you guys, I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven." What does that mean? Well it seems to mean 1 of 2 things. #1 That Jesus saw the fall of Satan in the beginning and as such is recognizing him as a defeated foe and warning them against the pride that caused his fall. "Hey, Satan enjoyed spiritual status and authority, yet because of pride he fell, be careful lest in your spiritual authority your pride bring you low." Or #2 (more likely) that Satan suffers major setback subject to His disciples advancing the cause of God's kingdom. Satan loses ground decisively; immediately and obviously as God's kingdom increases. As God's kingdom is propelled, Satan's kingdom falls like lightning, swiftly, decisively, and obviously. The fruit is evident.

Then Jesus extends to them spiritual authority; power and protection as they go out in His name (doesn't mean that they can't be hurt, they'd suffer tremendously physically for the gospel, but spiritually they're secure in Christ).

But for all that; rejoicing over those things is superficial...notice.

Vs 20

"You want a reason to rejoice?" Jesus says. Then let it *not* be in the things that you've done for God (healing people, preaching the gospel, casting out demons), but rather let it be in the things which God has done for you (He's forgiven you, cleansed you, He's written your name in the Lambs book of life).

Don't rejoice in what you do for Him, some people are real impressed with the work they do for God. But the fact of the matter is that we need to see what God has done for us as *far greater* than anything we could *ever* do for Him.

Spiritual authority in Jesus' name doesn't speak of a whole lot in the big picture. Jesus said that people would cast out demons in His name and do all sorts of great and mighty things in His name yet still not make it to heaven (Matt 7:22-23). So don't hang your hat on being right with God because spirits are subject to you in the name of Jesus. (Don't know how real some paranormal shows are [don't spend all my time watching them] but you'll see them invoke the name of Jesus to cast out a demon or cleanse a house or something, doesn't mean they're right with God.) So don't rejoice in the fact that spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your name is found written in the Lambs book of Life. May it never be about what we do for the Lord, but may it always be about what the Lord has done for us...

Prayer Points:

Lord may there be joy resonating in our hearts today because our names have been etched in Your book of Life. We pray that You would help us to stay focused; to not waste our time but to redeem the time being diligent in our labor unto You. We pray for laborers Lord, servants to help in the Harvest; put us to work in Your fields. Truly the harvest is plentiful, so much to be done, so many to be reached, so few to do the work. Stir our hearts, help us to hone in on what You'd have us to do, and do it.

If your name isn't written in the book of life God is extending the opportunity to you today to have it "penned" in. The offer of reconciliation, forgiveness, salvation through faith in Christ is extended to you. God wants peace through the blood of Jesus Christ salvation, or condemnation the choice is yours. Let me encourage you to open your heart and receive Jesus Christ