

Luke 10:1-12, 16-20

After this, the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them out two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.

²He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. So ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field. ³Go your way. Look, I am sending you out as lambs among wolves. ⁴Do not carry a money bag or traveler’s bag or sandals. Do not greet anyone along the way. ⁵Whenever you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace be to this house.’ ⁶And if a peaceful person is there, your peace will rest on him, but if not, it will return to you. ⁷Remain in that same house, eating and drinking what they give you, because the worker is worthy of his pay. Do not keep moving from house to house. ⁸Whenever you enter a town and they welcome you, eat what is set before you. ⁹Heal the sick who are in the town and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near you.’

¹⁰“But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, ¹¹‘Even the dust from your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this: The kingdom of God has come near.’ ¹²I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom on that day than for that town.

¹⁶“Whoever listens to you listens to me. Whoever rejects you rejects me. And whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me.”

¹⁷The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name!”

¹⁸He told them, “I was watching Satan fall like lightning from heaven. ¹⁹Look, I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy. And nothing will ever harm you. ²⁰Nevertheless, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names have been written in heaven.”

Harvest

I.

“Your kingdom come.” So we pray in the Lord’s Prayer, just as Jesus himself taught us to do. Martin Luther asks “*What does this mean?*” in his Small Catechism. His answer: “God’s kingdom certainly comes by itself even without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may also come to us.”

God’s kingdom is something that is beyond our human comprehension. God, in his goodness and power, provided salvation for all people. What God did is beyond ordinary human capabilities—it is superhuman. Sometimes we get the impression that the way God’s kingdom should come to us should be superhuman, too.

It doesn’t take much imagination to look at the world around us and realize there are many unbelievers. The world desperately needs to hear the message of sin and grace. “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...” (Romans 3:23, EHV). Paul tells us this, and it’s easy to see that he is right. Sin offends the mighty God. But he sent a Savior to deal with that sin. Paul continues: “...and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24, EHV). Everyone needs to hear that, too. Everyone needs to know that Jesus came so that no one *has* to face eternity in hell.

Do *you* know people who don’t know or understand what Paul said? If you go through your list of acquaintances, you probably do. Jesus could look out at the world and see the masses of people who were hungry for the gospel. He could see that many would believe this eternal-life-saving message. They were ready to be brought in to the family of believers.

“The Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them out two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. ²He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. So ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field” (Luke 10:1-2, EHV). Jesus’ concern is for the harvest. You and I don’t have to produce the harvest, or make it

grow. God does that—he controls the entire management of the harvest. Our prayer is that we would be united with God and his purpose to bring the harvest in.

Luther continues in his exposition of the Second Petition: “*How does God’s kingdom come?* God’s kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives his Holy Spirit, so that by his grace we believe his holy Word and lead a godly life now on earth and forever in heaven.”

“Ask the Lord of the harvest,” Jesus said. *Beg* the Lord of the harvest, is more the sense Jesus is giving. God the Holy Spirit works faith in the heart, but we are to watch—and to participate by harvesting.

II.

Did you notice who was sent into the harvest by Jesus? We tend to think always of the 12, and then of those who followed them and were commissioned by them. Jesus sent 72 at this time. No mention is ever made of them again. They apparently were called for a limited-scope mission. Go for these few days and do some harvesting.

As they go to the harvest, Jesus tells them: “Go your way. Look, I am sending you out as lambs among wolves” (Luke 10:3, EHV). The natural human condition is to be an enemy of God; unbelievers are like wolves. Those who have faith in Jesus are Christians; they are like lambs.

Two weeks ago I mentioned my Bible note that reminded me: “You’re not in sales, but in distribution.” Those who speak to others about Jesus—whether full time called workers, or individuals sharing what they know—the gospel is not a product you sell. When making products, companies are trying to fill the *wants* of their customers. In contrast, the gospel is repulsive to the human nature. No human being *wants* to be told he or she is sinful and in need of forgiveness. Unbelievers are not indifferent bystanders who have no concern about this matter one way or the other; they are hostile to Christianity.

Go your way to the harvest, anyway. Before he ascended into heaven Jesus said: “Surely I am with you always until the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20, EHV). What is there to fear, really, if Jesus is by your side when you go your way to the harvest?

“Do not carry a money bag or traveler’s bag or sandals” (Luke 10:4, EHV). The word for “carry” suggests hauling a burdensome object. A popular hymn reminds us that we are often “weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care” (Hymn 721, What a Friend We Have in Jesus). Jesus doesn’t want us to haul around the load of care we have because our sin and guilt when we tell people about what he has done for all. Let the Lord Jesus carry those things for you. remember that your burdens of your conscience and the sins you commit every day have been paid for by Jesus. He’s already dealt with your burdens; don’t let them weigh you down as you share the message of Jesus. When you show that *your* burden of sin has been dealt with, you have the opportunity to share the fact that *theirs* has already been carried to the cross, too.

III.

“Do not greet anyone along the way. ⁵Whenever you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace be to this house’” (Luke 10:4-5, EHV). Simple greetings along your way can serve to distract from the all-important message of salvation. Instead, make sure you give a greeting of peace. Remember that *true* peace is between people and God, not the superficial peace that comes and goes like a shifting shadow.

“And if a peaceful person is there, your peace will rest on him, but if not, it will return to you” (Luke 10:6, EHV). We have a new called worker coming—a new teacher. It will be natural to welcome her. She will be thrilled to see that the message of peace is in this congregation.

Sometimes those who hear the message of peace in Jesus want something other than the peace of the gospel. Such a person won’t experience real peace—it will return to the person who proclaimed “peace.” After all, the real message of peace ends in: “The kingdom of God has come near you” (Luke 10:9, EHV). “Your kingdom come,” we have been taught to pray. God’s kingdom *has* come among us, by the grace of God. Our Lord Jesus has won the battle against Satan. That message is different than any other message.

IV.

What do *you* want to hear from your Christian pastors and teachers? Is it good if they say: “I think,” or “I don’t think the Lord would...”? There is little room in Christianity for phrases like that.

“This is what the Lord says.” Those are the words you want to hear from your called workers. Those are also the words *you* want to use when you present the message of the gospel to others. *God’s Word* is a message of authority. You don’t have to apologize for it. You don’t have to be wishy-washy.

Peter wrote: “To be sure, we were not following cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the powerful appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty” (2 Peter 1:16, EHV). When you use *God’s Word* and present *God’s Word*, you aren’t using some fable or fairytale; you are speaking the very words of the Savior, and the eye-witness accounts of the apostles.

Some won’t believe what you share with them. Many didn’t believe Jesus, either, when he spoke to them in person. Don’t worry about what people think of your message. Jesus said: “Whoever listens to you listens to me. Whoever rejects you rejects me. And whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me” (Luke 10:16, EHV). When you go out to the harvest, you are going with Jesus’ authority.

V.

What was the first reaction of the 72 who had been sent out by Jesus into the harvest? Was it that they were received with open arms? Was it that the message of the coming kingdom was received with joy and accepted by the grace of God? Was it that they were considered worthy by Jesus of being sent out? None of these.

“The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, ‘Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name!’” (Luke 10:17, EHV). The 72 were stunned that they had such authority. “Cool!” they thought. “We could drive out demons!”

They *did* recognize that this power was in *Jesus’ Name*, not their own. They gave him all the credit and the glory. Healing and driving out demons served as their credentials; these things showed that these 72 were sent by God to proclaim his kingdom.

“He told them, ‘I was watching Satan fall like lightning from heaven’” (Luke 10:18, EHV). What allowed the 72—and you and me—to have any success in proclaiming Jesus is Jesus’ defeat of Satan on the cross.

Remember the time Jesus was being tempted by Satan in the wilderness for 40 days? Satan urged Jesus to jump off the pinnacle of the temple. You’ll be ok, Satan said. “For it is written: He will command his angels concerning you. And they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone” (Matthew 4:6, EHV). Jesus answered: “Again, it is written: You shall not test the Lord your God” (Matthew 4:7, EHV).

Keep that in mind when you hear what Jesus said to the 72 and to you: “Look, I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy. And nothing will ever harm you” (Luke 10:19, EHV). He wasn’t telling his followers to be snake-handlers to show that we have the power of God. He was reminding us that, as Paul said to the Romans, nothing “Will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:39, EHV).

So, Jesus says: “Do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names have been written in heaven” (Luke 10:20, EHV). *You* are destined for heaven.

So, head out to the harvest. Don’t be worried about the wolves, or even the attacks of Satan. Leave your burden of sin behind, because Jesus has already taken that burden on himself. Bring a message of peace into the harvest field. But most importantly, as you go to the harvest, remember that your name is already written in heaven. Amen.