

Jesus sends the church on mission

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[0 : 01] Please have a seat. And if you will, turn back in your Bibles to Luke chapter 10, and we're going to think about that section that we read.

We're following Jesus on the road to Jerusalem, and here in this section, Jesus sends the church on mission. As you find this in your Bible, I wonder if you've ever had this kind of experience where you're given a task, but certain key information is missing.

Where am I supposed to do this task? How am I supposed to do it, and why? Have you ever had that situation where some of those big questions have been left unanswered?

Give me a real recipe for frustration, confusion, and fear, maybe a lack of motivation. I remember when I had an office job for an environmental company, the boss in his wisdom sent me on a site visit to go and test some water samples, and it was a disaster, because I didn't know where the site was in the first place.

That was stressful enough. I had no idea what the equipment was in my bag, and I had absolutely no idea how to test water. That was a low point in my very short-lived period in that office.

[1 : 22] Well, last week, if you were here, we met Jesus on the road to Jerusalem, and he was really clear about his mission. He was on his way to Jerusalem.

He was going to go to the cross to die, but then he would rise, and he would return to glory. And this week, we're now going to focus on the mission of his followers, because he's going to send 72 followers, but he's not going to leave them confused and wondering what to do.

Rather, he answers the big questions for them. So he tells them where they are sent. He gives them guidance on how, how to be a missionary, and he tells them here's why to go.

And there's the wonderful motivation of joy for the church as we go to serve Jesus. And so I hope for those of us, at least who are Christians, this will be helpful when we think about our role, our calling to represent Jesus, whether we're going to be sent across the globe, or whether we're just going to be sent across the street, that we would understand our calling to mission.

So let's begin asking this question. Where? Where does the church go on mission? Back to verse 1. After this, the Lord appointed 72 others, sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.

[2 : 47] So notice, first of all, here's a shift. So often the focus is on Jesus' 12 disciples. So that inner circle of 12. But now, the focus is on 72 others.

The point that we're supposed to take is that the whole church is sent. Not just these 12. So it's not just for specialists or for the elite. The whole church is sent.

Where are they sent to? Well, on one level, the answer is they're to go to every town and place where he was about to go. And we get that sense that Jesus has got a really busy journey ahead of him.

There's 36 pairs of people being sent to prepare the way. Announcing to these towns and villages, Jesus, your king, has come.

It is the time to be ready. In a sense, this is our mission and message, too. That we declare that Jesus has come. He has come once. And he has lived the perfect life.

[3 : 45] And he has died a sacrificial death. And he has risen again in glory. But Jesus will come again to judge and to save and to make everything new.

And so our calling is to tell people we need to be ready now because Jesus is king. But on the second level, where they are sent is actually to the whole world.

And maybe you're going to ask, how is that? Where do we see the whole world in here? Well, notice that it's 72 who are sent. Okay? And in the Bible, often, numbers matter.

So Jesus sent 72. He could have sent 46. He could have sent 82. But he chose to send 72. Why? Well, I think we find the answer back in the book of Genesis.

So in Genesis chapter 10, there's a big, long list of names, sometimes known in our Bible as the table of nations. And for a Jewish person, that list of names represented the whole world.

[4 : 47] So the whole world was represented by 72 names representing 72 tribes and peoples. That Jesus sends 72, tells us that Jesus has come to bring good news for the whole world.

That was good news in Genesis 10. In Genesis 10, we find a people who are living in exile, far away from God, because of sin. They were living under curse instead of blessing because of sin.

This is a situation we find ourselves in without Jesus. But the good news that the 72 bring is that Jesus has come. And by his life, death, and resurrection, by faith in him, we can be brought back to God.

And we can know blessing from our God. So these 72 are sent to declare that Jesus is king. He rules over all nations because he's the son of God.

He brings good news to all nations. And it's wonderful to recognize that his church, since this day, has grown and developed.

[5 : 57] It crosses continents. It spans the globe. But the church as God's people also crosses classrooms and workplaces to bring the wonderful message of the hope of Jesus.

So in our church, we support Craig, who's church planting down in Galassians and the Scottish borders. And we support Manuel and Patty doing ministry in Columbia and throughout Latin America.

But it's not just a mission for them. It's also you and I who are sent, as we find ourselves in Edinburgh, to go for Jesus into the world representing him.

So perhaps the next question then becomes, well, how do we do that? How are we to be missionaries? So we've got the where question. We can go anywhere and everywhere for Jesus.

How should we go about this task as we are sent by him? Well, let's listen in to verses 5 to 16, where Jesus gives four essentials for Christians who are on mission.

[7 : 03] Here's the first one in verse 2. As we go on mission, we are to work and pray. So in verse 2, we have this harvest image.

We're getting close to harvest time here in Scotland. He told them, verse 2, the harvest is plentiful.

That tells us there is lots to do. Then Jesus goes on to say, but the workers are few. So when we're sent on mission, we understand there's lots to do.

There's no time to delay. There's no time to sit back. There's an urgent need to bring the harvest in. So Jesus says to us, we should work hard on mission.

In building relationships. In listening well and answering questions. In looking to build bridges. So that people have a chance to encounter God and his word.

[8 : 04] We should work hard to help to build a living community of faith. So when people come into this place, they can both hear and experience the love of God. Because we want to be able to tell everyone, Jesus Christ has died for you.

Believe in him. So we work hard. And we pray hard. Because immediately Jesus says, ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers.

So we're reminded, it's God's harvest. It's God's mission. So we go with his power and guidance. So we are to be a praying people. And we're to pray specifically that God would send out workers.

So there's this wonderful impulse. There's this wonderful movement that God saves people. And he brings them to himself. And then he sends his people out. On mission we're to pray that there would be that movement within us as his people.

Sent out with good news to share. Some of us will be sent out with good news to share to completely different places. Maybe some of us will be going to unreached people groups.

[9 : 15] Maybe to places that were once reached but now have turned their back on Jesus. But we are called to work. And we're called to pray. Knowing that we might be the answer to our own prayers.

I was reminded of, there's a chap who's now working in France by the name of Alan. But he was a church leader for many years in Wales, in the UK.

He used to lead his church regularly in prayer meetings for mission. We'd encourage people to go on mission. And after probably 20 years of ministry here in the UK, as he led the church to pray, he felt compelled.

And now he's church planting in the west coast of France. We are to work and we are to pray. Let me invite you once again to engine room on Wednesday, if you can, to do the work of mission as we pray together.

Secondly, how to be a missionary. Verse 3 and 4, embrace helplessness. Look at these two different pictures of being helpless, of being dependent, of being at the mercy of others.

[10 : 23] Verse 3, go, I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. What is Jesus doing there? He's preparing us for the reality of spiritual opposition.

That this message that we have will not always be well received and we will not always be well received as messengers for Jesus. Then in verse 4, slightly different emphasis.

We're to go like empty-handed travelers. Do not take a purse or bag or sandals and do not greet anyone on the road. We're not to be reliant on ourself and our own resources. Rather, we go depending on our God.

Embrace helplessness. Be ready to face danger. And remember who's speaking this? It's Jesus. The Son of God. The Savior of the world.

Who's on the road to the cross. He walks this road of suffering, of humiliation, of rejection, of death.

[11 : 25] And as he calls us into mission, he calls us to be ready to walk that same road for him and for his kingdom.

And so as we embrace helplessness, it is vital that we learn to trust our good shepherd. To trust him to lead us and to be with us.

To trust that the Jesus who said, I will never leave you, will walk with us on this journey of faith. And as we go on mission.

When are the times when you and I might feel helpless or feel threatened? Perhaps it's when we're the only Christian in our class.

Perhaps it's when our faith is challenged in our workplace. Perhaps you have a friendship group that dislikes your newfound Christian faith. Maybe it's as you find yourself in a new city or a new culture.

[12 : 27] There are many times where we might feel helpless as we live for Jesus. But beyond our fear. Recognize that Jesus is inviting us to trust him.

That there is that promise in God's word that his grace is made perfect in our weakness. And so we're called, as we are called, to embrace helplessness.

Also to embrace humility. To recognize we are dependent children. And to have the expectation that God will allow his glory to be displayed through us and indeed despite us.

So we're called to embrace helplessness. Helplessness. Thirdly, as we go on mission, we need to speak good news that Jesus is king.

Notice as they're saying, Jesus anticipates what they are to do and what they are to say. First of all, let's look at their message. Verse 9. Heal those who are ill and tell them the kingdom of God has come near you.

[13 : 35] End of verse 11. Yet be sure of this. The kingdom of God has come near. Okay? So Jesus focused for their mission. The kingdom of God which has come near.

So what is the kingdom of God? The kingdom of God is the rule and reign of God. It's a recognition that he controls and governs everything.

And that his purpose stands. So what's the purpose of God as king? If you read our Bibles, we discover that God's purpose is to save a people for himself.

So the kingdom of God speaks to us of God's plan and purpose to save a people for himself. And it also reminds us that God has a plan to make this world new.

So God wants to both rescue and to renew and to restore this world. And so the followers of Jesus are sent out with that mission.

[14 : 38] They're told to announce the kingdom of God has come near. Why? Because Jesus, the king, has come. Jesus is the king who saves. He saves us from our sin.

Because in his death on the cross, there is free and full forgiveness from sin. He saves us from our separation from our God, which we experience now without Christ.

And which we would experience for all eternity if we never trust in Jesus. By his cross and resurrection, he saves us.

And Jesus promises also to renew and to restore. That just as Jesus has defeated all the forces of darkness at the cross, so when he returns at the end of time, he will finally defeat sin and darkness and death forever.

There will be the victory and triumph of good forevermore. And his people, those who trust him, will experience and enjoy that goodness forever.

[15 : 47] So on our mission, we want to speak loud and clear that Jesus is God, that Jesus is king. And that Jesus, by his grace, invites us to know the love of God.

To find forgiveness from God. To be invited to know in the future the world that we all want. As we turn away from sin.

As we put our trust in him. As God, by his grace, would save us. So that's the message. But notice as well, briefly, the actions that Jesus gives to his followers.

Which also point in the same direction. So in verses 5 to 9, you have this positive picture of when these followers arrive at a house and they're welcomed.

And their message is welcome. To accept the message is to accept the king. And to accept the king, verse 5, is to receive peace.

[16 : 50] What a wonderful promise. Jesus would give us peace from God. Would reconcile us to God. Would give us peace in our hearts.

And when Jesus the king and his message and messengers are welcomed. That these towns and villages are going to see signs of the kingdom.

Verse 9. Heal those who are ill. Just as with Jesus, every miracle was a signpost. Here is what the world will be like one day.

Free of sickness and suffering and pain and death. The disciples also are invited to give them a preview. That these followers are saying, To trust in Jesus is to be invited into this wonderful kingdom.

That's when the message is accepted. But what about when the message is rejected? In verses 10 to 15. We discover that to reject the king.

[17 : 52] Is to receive a warning of coming judgment. Verse 10. When you enter a town and are not welcomed. Go into its streets and say, Even the dust of your town we wipe from our feet as a warning to you.

So shake the dust off. To reject God is to be rejected by God in the end. And there's that somber warning in verses 13 to 15.

And verse 12 as well. Where Jesus lists some terrible places in the Old Testament. Known for doing terrible things. Jesus says it will be more bearable for those people.

Than for anyone who rejects Jesus. As he has declared in the gospel. The more that we know of God's plan of salvation.

The more that we understand that Jesus is the son of God and the savior. To reject him is an eternally significant serious thing. And notice too verse 11.

[19 : 00] Again. Even the dust of your town we wipe from our feet as a warning. Yet be sure of this. The kingdom of God has come near. It's a reminder to us that in the end.

Our opinion of Jesus does not change the fact that he is king. We can say I don't believe Jesus is God. Or we can say I don't need him as king. But it doesn't change the fact that he is.

The eternal son of God. That he does have authority over all of us. Either to save or to judge. And so again the call is to be ready.

In our urgent mission as Christians we need to speak plainly. To help people to understand that Jesus is king. And they need to receive him and respond to him with faith.

The last encouragement that we have as we go as missionaries we find in verse 16. And it's this. That we go as Jesus ambassadors.

[20 : 01] Whoever listens to you listens to me. Whoever rejects you rejects me. But whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me. Think about an ambassador of a king or a government.

What is their function? Their function is to represent that king or that government. To speak and act in line with the wishes of their king or of the government and nation they represent.

Jesus reminds these followers. We have a great dignity. And a great privilege. As we are sent. We are sent in Jesus name.

And we are sent in Jesus authority. With Jesus authority. But we also have this responsibility. That we are speaking and acting for Jesus. I wonder how we feel about sharing our faith.

Maybe especially as we are reminded of potential rejection. Sharing our faith can be scary. Because we know that rejection might come. Perhaps we wonder about the questions that we might get asked.

[21 : 05] Will we have the answers to them? Perhaps it's just the embarrassment that we feel. About what it's going to cost us socially. And we can feel really isolated. And we can feel almost paralyzed.

Because of all these worries. What if I lack the skill? Or I lack the knowledge. If I do the wrong thing. Well here in verse 16. Is a truth intended to give us strength and courage.

Whoever listens to you. Listens to me. It's Jesus mission. Jesus stands with us. It's Jesus who speaks through us. By his spirit.

There's a wonderful freedom in remembering. It's not our job to save anyone. We are called to be faithful. But it's God alone who saves.

There's a helpful little book I was thinking about this week. And actually there's a little green one right in the top corner. On the bookshelf. There's two or three of them left. That book's sold by the way. Is free for anybody to take anything.

[22 : 04] There's a little book called Before You Share Your Faith. And there's one image there that stuck with me. When I read it a little while back. The guy said Matt Smethorst who wrote it. He said we are called as Christians.

To speak to spiritual corpses. You know that imagery in Ezekiel 37. Of dead bones dry bones. Or Ephesians 2.

That without Christ spiritually dead. As ambassadors for Jesus. We are called to speak to spiritual corpses. It's as if we speak to a coffin.

But it's God who cracks the coffin open. It's God who gives spiritual life to spiritually dead people.

So when someone comes to faith. It's a miracle. And all glory belongs to God. And not to us. Whoever listens to you. Listens to me.

[23 : 00] And so they're sent as ambassadors. And think about it. As these 72 are sent two by two. They are speaking about the king that they both knew. And loved.

They had the opportunity to spend time with Jesus. Watching. Listening. Learning. Perhaps we can think about Peter and John in the book of Acts. They were boldly preaching.

And because of that they got thrown into prison. And people tell them to be quiet. And one thing that they notice. As they have joy despite persecution. They noted that these men had been with Jesus.

There's a power. There's a boldness. There's a joy. In representing the king who they knew. And loved. Before we share our faith.

We need to spend time with our king. We need to enjoy the gospel for ourselves. To make it a priority to spend time in God's word.

[23 : 57] And in prayer. And in worship. Because as we remember good news for ourselves. Then we'll have the impulse to share it with others. That takes us to the last thing here.

For this morning. Why go on mission for Jesus? Maybe this answer will be surprising. In light of him saying you're going like lambs among wolves.

In light of the fact that you will meet rejection. It might be a surprise. That the theme of joy. In verses 17 to 24. Keeps on repeating.

But here we have the antidote to fear. Here we have a motivation. Despite rejection. And it's joy. So let's look briefly at this motivation of joy.

First the joy for the church. In verses 17 to 20. Did you notice? The 72 returned with joy. Now what gave them joy? Lord even the demons submit to us in your name.

[24 : 58] So they had joy in what they did. And isn't it wonderful what they did? We should never undermine that. Jesus is winning spiritual victory. The forces of darkness are being stopped.

And Jesus sees in this Satan's defeat. That's a wonderful thing. But Jesus says find greater joy in this. Rejoice. That your names are written in heaven.

Don't find your joy. And your identity in what you do. Find your joy and identity as Christians in who you are. And who you belong to.

That your names are written in heaven. When we go on mission. It's our joyful delight as children of God.

Who have a secure inheritance in heaven. And it's out of that secure identity and secure destiny. That we find the joy to want to share good news.

[25 : 53] Even. Even when it's hard. So there's the joy of belonging to God. There's more joy for the church towards the end of these verses. There's the joy of knowing Jesus as Savior.

Notice Jesus turned to his disciples and say. 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.

What's his point? The church has greater privilege than the Old Testament believers. The Old Testament believers lived looking forward. Wondering. When is God going to fulfill all his wonderful promises?

Anybody now. Since the time of Jesus can say. I know how he fulfills all those promises. Through his son. Through the king. Through King Jesus. So there is joy for the church.

As we understand and discover. Jesus is God's way. To complete his plan of salvation. And it's out of that joy. That we're able to speak. Of the son of God.

[26 : 54] Who loved us and gave himself for us. Who is the reason. For the hope that we have. Now and forever. So there is real joy. For the church. As we think about mission.

But notice too. That we get to share in the joy of Jesus himself. Isn't it wonderful in verse 21. That we discover. Here is something that gives Jesus joy.

At that time. Jesus full of joy. Through the Holy Spirit 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. There is joy for Jesus. In God graciously revealing himself. And his salvation to people.

Not to the wise and the great and the good. But to little children. To the dependent. To the trusting. Those who receive this gift of grace readily.

[27 : 53] And notice that the father is pleased also. Jesus is pleased. The father is pleased. To call people to himself. To show people his glory. And all for his praise.

So Jesus has joy in that revelation. And there is more joy for Jesus in verse 22. There is joy for Jesus in revealing God to us. All things have been committed to being by my father.

No one knows who the father is except the father. And no one knows who the father is except the son. And those to whom the son chooses to reveal him.

There is joy for Jesus in revealing God. In revealing the way back to God. In being the way back to God. The one relationship that you and I were made for.

As image bearers of God. We are made to know and enjoy our creator. That relationship that was lost because of sin. And rebellion. Is regained.

[28 : 55] Through trusting in Jesus. In Jesus we see the glory of God revealed. And we discover the way back to him. So our mission.

Is and always should be a joyful mission. Yes there is pain. And there is toil. But there is joy. As we share who God is. As we share what God has done for us in Jesus.

There is joy as we recognize that people can meet God. Through his word and through the gospel. That God is pleased to save people. So Jesus sends the church on a mission of good news.

The mission of the church is not like that bad work experience I had. That maybe you have had. Jesus prepares us. Jesus answers our questions. Jesus motivates us.

So the next time we have an opportunity to share our faith. And maybe we feel our palms begin to sweat. And we wonder. Is this the moment where I should say something? Remember. That God sends us on mission.

[30 : 02] To share the good news of Jesus the King. With the whole world. And every Christian is called to that. Remember that we go on this mission for Jesus.

Declaring that he is the King who saves. And we go with Jesus. That he is present with power to help us. And remember and hold on to the joy behind our mission.

Think about the joy that we can have in inviting weary souls to know Jesus the loving Savior. Think about the joy that we can experience as the church in speaking of our wonderful Savior.

And think about the joy of Jesus himself. Who loves to save sinners for his glory. Let's pray briefly together.

Lord God we thank you. That in your wisdom. You have chosen to continue. Your work through your people. The church.

[31 : 06] And sometimes we are amazed at that. As we recognize our own weakness and limitations. But Lord we thank you for your grace and your goodness.

Your mercy and your strength that sustain us. Lord we do pray that you would enable us to go. And to make disciples of all nations. We pray that we would do so working and praying.

That we would be ready to embrace helplessness. Helplessness while we are trusting in you. Lord we pray that you would give us words to speak.

Of Jesus the King. That we would be faithful as ambassadors. And that you would give us joy in the gospel. Help us to rejoice in the Lord Jesus.

That we would want to share that joy with others. And we do ask that you would be pleased to work through this church. To bring men and women and boys and girls. To the joy of knowing Jesus as saviour for themselves.

[32 : 06] And we pray in his name. Amen. Now we'll finish with the hymn. Crown him with many crowns.

And again let's stand as we sing together. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.