

Luke 10:1-24

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- [0 : 0 0] Good morning. It's good to be with God's people and thank you for your prayers of the week for my family and me and we request that you would continue to pray for us in the loss of our youngest brother. Let me pray.
- Father, we love you and thank you for the opportunity to stand before your people and open up your word and we pray that you would be glorified in it, that we would hear it and receive it and respond to it and that your kingdom would be advanced because of our response. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.
- Amen. Third week in September. And what that means is that several things are already in process. School has started again. And I trust that our students are doing well and your parents are doing well with you.
- And I know that we've got some educators here and I trust that the year has started well on your behalf also. Another thing that that means is that football is underway. It's gaining momentum both at the high school level, the collegiate level, and Lord knows professional has got started off with a bang both on the field as well as off the field if you know what I'm talking about.
- Well, around the country today and tonight there will be coaches who will be meeting with their teams. There will be an opportunity beforehand for coaches to spur on those who will be hitting the field on this afternoon or tonight.
- [1 : 5 8] And whether there is a victory or whether there is a defeat, there will be an after meeting to go over the details of the game.
- I mention that because our text on today where we do not get to see the disciples on the field. We certainly get to see them before they go out verses 1 through 16.
- And we see them also when they come back verses 17 through 24. I would like to highlight some things along the way. The first thing I want you to see in this text is two simple pictures.
- Two simple pictures. Then I want you to see several very critical principles. And then I want to encourage you with three essential practices that I believe that inform us from this particular text.
- Two pictures, several principles, three practices. Let's begin with the pictures. Picture number one is pretty clear, isn't it?
- [3 : 1 3] Imagine the following scene. Jesus has a team of 72 men. They're standing before him.
- And this is in addition to the 12 that we see sent out at the beginning of chapter 9 and verse 1. The 12 apostles, really there's a sense in which they represented the 12 tribes of Israel.
- Jesus had appointed them. Again, 12, the number of governance, the number of the 12 tribes. Some feel that the 72, and again, manuscript evidence, some give 70, some give 72.

Sticking with the ESV here on the 72. It really is not a critical difference in that both numbers seem to be symbolic. Symbolic of what was thought of in antiquity to be the number of nations in the world.

Why this particular strategy? Huh? Well, as we look, look back at chapter 9 and verse 51. When the days drew near for him, that's Jesus to be taken up.

[4 : 27] That's his ascension. He set his face to go to Jerusalem. He was going to face the cross there. Jerusalem and the cross lay before Jesus, but also there was still much ground to cover.

He still needed, there were some places in Palestine that he needed to get out and get the word about the kingdom of God being near through his person and work.

And so they were going before him. There's a sense in which these 72, there were his advanced men. And through their ministry, there were those who were going to get a taste of the ministry of Jesus.

Picture Jesus standing before these men. There's a sense of urgency in his voice. He doesn't mince any words. And his message is clear.

Look what he says in verse 2. He said to them, The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Pray, therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.

[5 : 37] Lots of work to be done. A limited workforce to do that. Therefore, an earnest appeal was to be made to the Lord of the harvest, the owner of the harvest, in order to get workers out into the fields.

Over the last few weeks, I've done a bit of driving. And as I drove either down to southern Illinois on last weekend, all the way to Kansas and Missouri, I could see all of the corn fields.

And imagine one person or two or three going out with a sickle in hand and beginning whatever they do to gather in the corn.

What a monumental task in some of those fields that were there. Imagine, that's the idea that we see here, particularly in the text.

And notice what Jesus is saying in verse 3. Go your way. I am sending you. And again, this implies his lordship. He's the owner of the harvest.

[6 : 44] And it's under his authority that he was going to send workers into the harvest. But Jesus didn't pull any punches. Jesus, the mission was not a simple, nor was it a benign kind of a mission.

It was dangerous because he said, I'm sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. Huh? When's the last time that you heard of a sports team known as the lambs?

Huh? Now, certainly there's the St. Louis rams. But here's another thing. Naturally speaking, there is no contest between a lamb and a wolf.

Huh? Wolves actually have lambs for breakfast, dinner, and lunch. Huh? He says, I'm sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.

Huh? Here's Jesus. This is pre-mission talk, if you will. Huh? Not only is the mission fraught with danger, there was to be minimal kind of distraction.

[7 : 50] They were to travel light. It's interesting. As I was home gathering with my brothers, and I'm not going to give a brother's name that goes along with this.

But hey, listen to this, ladies and men. One of my brothers had two suitcases. He was not traveling light. He had eight pairs of shoes.

Ladies, that will probably rival some of you. Huh? Well, he's got it. He had a double dose because both my mother and father, they like to dress and dress nice.

So he had dress shoes. He had sports shoes. And that's the way he rolls. That's the way he travels. He was not traveling light, if you will.

Because Jesus, notice what he says. Again, it harkens back to this whole Elijah, Elisha kind of dynamic that we see at play in Luke.

[8 : 58] Because this is what Elisha tells his servant Gehazi in 2 Kings chapter 4. Take up your garment and take my staff in your hand and go.

If you meet anyone, do not greet him. And if anyone greets you, do not reply. And lay my staff on the face of the child. There was a mission. And the mission was primary.

And it demanded focused attention on what the mission was. And that is the point that Jesus was getting across to his men.

And this huddle, if you will, that was before the game. I'm aware it's hazardous duty that's out there. And you need to be focused.

Focus. Did you notice the priority of peace in verses 5 and 6? Whenever you enter, first say, peace to this house.

[9 : 56] And if the son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon it. But if not, it will return unto you. And notice, remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide.

For the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house. Not the physical goods that a household would provide was of primary importance.

Huh? It was the atmosphere in the house that would lend itself to the kind of ministry that was demanded in a particular way. Kingdom business demanded the right kind of people, the right kind of partnership, if you will.

Yet again, think of both the partnerships of both Elijah and Elisha. You remember the homes that they went into? Huh?

The Shulamite and the widow that prepared a place for the man of God in Arden. That became a base of sorts for the kind of ministry that was needed in that day.

[11 : 01] The homes of peace became the ministry base for those ancient servants of God. And that's what Jesus wanted for the servants who were going out.

Such would be the same for the followers of Jesus. From such places, ministry in a given town would go forth. Ministry that included both the visual and verbal evidences that God's kingdom rule was near.

You see that there in verse 8? Heal the sick in it. Verse 9. And say to them, the kingdom of God has come near to you.

Notice what's being said here. Again, a place of peace for which they were to work. Visual and verbal kinds of evidences that Jesus or the rule of God was near.

Healings and exorcisms. These were tangible expressions of heaven's compassion, if you will. Heaven's mercy. And then verbally, the good news of the availability of heaven's forgiveness and grace were to be heralded.

[12 : 16] Oh, what a message. And what people need to hear in our particular day. Of the forgiveness of God. The grace of God.

The mercy of God. That has been extended from heaven's throne to earth dwellers. Peace on earth. Goodwill toward men. In and through the person.

And the work of Jesus. And it was these very things that validated the nearness of God in the ministry of Jesus. The Messiah. Didn't he say it?

Oh, I love this in Luke chapter 4. We had that particular chapter some months ago. But in Jesus was the very jubilee of God.

God. Liberation. And freedom. And access to God. And here, through his heralds, he was proclaiming that kind of message.

[13 : 14] As you look on in the verses that continue in verses 10 through 16. Jesus made it clear that everyone who heard them, they were not going to be received with open arms.

Do you see that? Look at verse 10. But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet will wipe off against you.

Nevertheless, know this, that the kingdom of God has come near. Not everyone will receive what heaven had to offer. Wow.

Just think about, think, the God of heaven offers himself and all those things that go along with his nature, forgiveness and mercy.

And who in their right mind would refuse the very mercy of God? Huh? Huh? Oh, we understand, according to 2 Corinthians chapter 4.

[14 : 19] The God of this world has blinded the minds of those who believe not, lest the glorious light of the gospel should shine unto them. Ah, the thief who comes to steal, to kill, to destroy, and to blind.

Ah, but may God penetrate their darkness through the light of the gospel. And may it penetrate the haze and the fog in the hearts and the minds of those who listen.

Huh? Ah, but it's going to be refused. It's worse than the offenses of the notoriously wicked people of Sodom. Huh?

The sin of Sodom in its various forms should not be minimized. Of course, there was sexual sin. There was pride. They didn't take care of the poor. Those kinds of things.

I mean, the mass of it, the plethora of their sin. Huh? But notice what's being said. Neither, so it's, had this message been preached, which there, again, could not be minimized.

[15 : 23] Nevertheless, the kingdom of God, I tell you, will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town. Wow. That really raises the bar on the message, doesn't it?

And how very important it is. Those who would be, who would be rejected would be in good company. What Jesus is saying in the verses that follow.

Hey, you're in good company in that they rejected me. Huh? The Lord then would, he identified the cities that did not respond in ways that were commensurate with the revelation and the light that was given into it.

You see that in verses 13 through 16? Chorazin. Bethsaida. Huh? These were these towns, these villages that were in upper Galilee where Jesus primarily ministered.

And then Capernaum, this was the place where Jesus had his ministry residence when he was on earth. Huh? The Lord's base of operation had been in Galilee.

[16 : 29] And it was there, Isaiah chapter 9, verse 1 and following, that the light of the gospel had shined most brightly. These were the villages that rejected the very light of Christ and had similar light dawned entire inside.

And they would have repented and would have followed. But that was not the case in these Galilean towns. How sad. Light had come and they had rejected the very light.

Huh? Here's the huddle. Jesus is telling them just before he's sending them out what to expect. The agenda of Jesus and the task of the hour and his time was getting short.

The amount of work that remained was overwhelming. And so he sends out his representatives to go before him. Therefore, he commissioned them and empowered them for mission, making them aware that danger and rejection awaited them along the way.

But the work of harvesting includes the verbal proclamation of the nearness of God's rule and the visual or visible acts of compassion that met people at the point of their name.

[17 : 46] That was the first picture that we see in our text today. And so they went. Given that particular talk, if you will, that particular gathering, that particular huddle.

Huh? They went. It's assumed and understood by what we see in the text that follow. They went and experienced God's power in the process.

Now they were returning in the verses that follow. And it's quite interesting just how they return. Huh? And thus we see the second picture in verses 17 through 24.

This is the after the mission. And can you imagine? Sent forth by Jesus. Now they're returning. And what a return that it was. Imagine the 72 having gone out.

They're regathered now. There's a buzz in the air. The two men teams are debriefing one another in the process. They're telling various responses to God's word that they had seen along the way.

[18 : 50] People who had been delivered both in body and in soul. Imagine this is a locker room scene after the victory. Could have been high-fiving and other things.

A sense of jubilation that was in the air. There was joy. We see that in verse 17. The 72 return with joy saying, Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name.

Huh? Huh? Wow. What a celebration. But Jesus put a little rain on their party on that day. Huh? Anxiety had been replaced by sheer joy.

But sobering words from Jesus followed when they got back. Basically, he said, hey, man, let's not get carried too far here. Huh? Let's not lose perspective.

Then he noted that what was behind the victory that they had experienced on the field. You see what he says in verse 18?

[19 : 49] Hey, guys, you need to know something. I saw Satan falling like lightning from heaven. Huh? Here's the idea behind here. Let's don't lose perspective.

The picture that Jesus gives them is one of defeat in the heavenly realm. And as a result of that, the rapid fall of Satan, the ministry of Jesus in that day had in fact established a beachhead of sorts of ministry for those in that particular day as well as in our own day.

He's the ultimate source of power and victory. And they were victorious because he himself was victorious.

He was their ultimate source of power. Huh? And the real cause of joy was not to be what they had done or how God had used them.

Huh? With power over the forces of the enemy. The real source of joy was really what had been done on their behalf. Their names had been recorded in heaven.

[21 : 01] Do not rejoice in this that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice. Verse 20, that your names are written in heaven. Huh? I mean, we even think of what Jesus says in Matthew, according to Matthew's chapter words.

Many will come to me in that day. And they will say, Lord, have we not done A and B and C? We've done this and that. We've cast out devils in your name. And Jesus said, don't rejoice because of this.

Huh? Because many will say unto me all of these things. And he will say unto them, I never knew you. So that is no clear indication that one is a child of God.

Huh? Well, mission field victories are great. But ultimate joy is because there has been a transaction that has been made in heaven. And your name has been entered into the very book of God.

The fact that you are a citizen in heaven. And of course, we know that that comes in and through the person and the work of Jesus Christ today. I love the way that we see this sort of domino effect of joy itself.

[22 : 18] On the one hand, the disciples, this group of 72, they return with joy. Jesus says, don't rejoice in this, verse 20, but rejoice in the fact that your name is written down.

But notice our Lord himself gets in on the rejoicing in verse 21. And that hour he, that's Jesus, rejoiced himself.

Huh? Not only does the joy of the disciples come into view, but the joy of Jesus enters into the picture. And it is a spirit prompted, a spirit empowered joy based on what his father had done on behalf of his followers.

You notice that? He says, I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and the understanding. The wise and the understanding probably had reference to those who religiously were in the know in that day.

Probably a reference to the religious leaders. That though they didn't recognize their blindness, John chapter 9, nonetheless, they still were blind.

[23 : 32] Huh? Huh? Willy?

Willy? frightened because of the ministry of the Father and the Son and their mutual revelation of one another that we see there in verse 22.

God has graciously in and through the ministry of Jesus had made himself known in new and fresh ways. The Father had entrusted the Son in the matter of revelation.

With the Father and Son, there's this reciprocal, this mutual knowledge, and both were in the business of making each other known. Notice the pronunciation of blessedness in verse 23.

Turning to his disciples, he said privately, blessed are the eyes that see what you see. Oh, and I love this in that he's telling them why.

[24 : 55] He said, for I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see and did not see and hear, but do hear and did not hear. In other words, these people, respected people, kings and prophets, those who had been blessed and used of God in the past, they longed to see.

Abraham, John chapter 8, he longed to see this particular day. He saw it by faith, but didn't behold it with his visual sight. But here, they're seeing the kingdom of God manifested in unprecedented kind of ways.

And Jesus said, you're blessed in that you see that. Before, in the huddle, and afterwards, two pictures, one before going on mission, one after coming back from mission.

Now, what then, what are some critical principles that we see from what we see in these pictures? Verses 1 and 2, we see the principle of ownership.

The harvest belongs to God. It's his. The work of the harvest needs the laborers, the followers of Christ, people working the fields on his behalf.

[26 : 16] And we must work those fields in our particular day. It's not just something for those of yesterday, because if you haven't noticed, the fields remain white, the harvest, even in our day.

I like the way that Brooklyn Tabernacle expressed it in song, the field of souls. We work the fields of souls together, you and I.

Some fields are blooming now. Other fields are dry. We're not the same, but differences aside, we work the field of souls together, you and I.

One is off the foreign soil to work a distant land. Another anchors close to home to hold a neighbor's hand. Who has served the father most and who has labored best, that life devoted to our God, the devotion will be blessed.

The field of souls, they're all around us. They're in Woodlawn where I live, Hyde Park, Kenwood, all around us. And may God enable us to see the demands on you and me as we think about those who are around us.

[27 : 36] I feel a measure of conviction in my own soul and a measure of the lack of engagement or intentional engagement because after all, we are a church.

I mean, it's been said on this morning, we're on mission. And in various ways, you and I are engaged in the work of the harvest, whether it's through prayer or through community group kind of being on mission together kinds of things or in personal and family kind of ways.

How much does are we mission-minded even where you and I find ourselves today? The field is the world and the harvest belongs to God.

and may he give us wisdom in how to engage in more intentional kinds of ways. The principle of provision, the law of the harvest will indeed provide workers in his harvest in order for us to accomplish what needs to be done.

And may he continue to ignite our souls in that process. He compels his followers to go. Do you in any way feel the tug or the compulsion?

[29 : 00] There was a time, and again, that I myself, I found myself more compelled just to say a word and I don't see that as much present in my life these days that, I mean, just going up to people, you know, did you know this, that God loves you?

Or are you a person of faith? In some way, engaging people in spiritual conversation just think of the various ways that we engage them, how much are spiritual conversations a part of what we do?

But God will provide people to go. And may you and I be a part of the cadre of people who do that. It's the principle of opposition. Reception is not guaranteed.

The odds are actually against us, but we must not allow that to stop us as the followers of Jesus. The principle of joy, it's in order, primarily because you and I are children of God and it is those of us who use in order to bring joy to other people.

Finally, three essential practices. In other words, so what? What do you and I do? What do we do perhaps to fan the flame a little bit more so that we might be more consciously engaged as those who are indeed on mission with Jesus in our particular world today?

[30 : 33] Certainly, prayer about the mission is in order because I believe that Jesus in this particular passage, he shares his heart with his disciples in order that they might share his mission.

Talk to the Lord of the harvest about the harvest itself. Whether it is those in your building or those on your block, perhaps more intentional conversation to the Lord of the harvest may help us in the stoking of our fires of really being intentionally and regularly on mission.

Catch the vision of the harvest and allow the Lord to share his vision for the harvest with us in the process. So there's prayer about the mission but also there's participation in the mission itself.

I love what we, again, were more intentional about a few years ago. One-to-one reading. A marvelous way of engaging people whether it is an unbeliever or a new believer or training someone for gospel ministry.

Participating in the ministry through the Word is one of the ways that you and I can be on point in our world helping them to see that God was in his Son reconciling the world through him.

[31 : 58] But, not simply being, participating through the ministry of the Word, but participation through the ministry of mercy. the ministry of mercy.

Sharing the Word of Jesus on the one hand, but sharing the mercy of Jesus on the other. There's various ways that you and I can do it. I'm glad that even today we have deacons that are appointed as far as deacons for community outreach in ways that will help us to be more intentional and more specific in going where the mercy of Jesus needs to be manifested even in our community.

Be on mission through the Word, be on mission through mercy, but also prayer, participation, and again, praise.

Rejoicing is in order on the basis of what has been done for us on behalf of Christ, but praise is also in order in what has been revealed to us about Christ.

And, oh, brothers and sisters, you and I should rejoice in that because, yes, friends, if you're in Christ, your eyes see, huh, and see, you see in ways that are greater than our people of faith that are behind us in the Old Testament era, we see clearly.

[33 : 23] Yes, we still see through a glass darkly, but we see more clearly than our faith forbearers did in the past, huh? What's the word for those of us who are on mission today?

And here's the final thing or the big idea or the theme. The mission of Jesus Christ, our Lord, needs faith-filled, obedient followers of Jesus.

That is what the mission needs. It needs people of faith, full of faith, people who are obedient followers of Christ. Friends, I trust that it is you and me today.

May God help us in new and clear and distinctive ways that we may realize the harvest, huh?

That we may see people coming in by reason of your efforts and mine. They may not join our church. We would trust that they will. But may God enable us to see freshly through the encouragement of Jesus' words in our text and both in the before the mission as well as after the mission.

[34 : 36] And may there are people that come in by result of our engaging with him for his glory, for his honor. And may it begin with those of us who are leading and may it spill over in the rest of us for the glory and the honor of God.

Let me pray. Heavenly Father, we give thanks this morning for your kindness to us through Christ. And thank you for this example, these pictures of before helping us to see the demands of mission, but after helping us to see the impact of mission and the fact, oh God, of what you have done and our participation in it.

May you be glorified in us and may we find ourselves being more faithful to the mission that you've called us with, to be on mission with you in this world for your glory and for your honor.

Let's stand and sing our last song together. to be to be to be to be a!