

The goal of mission

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[0 : 00] Will you join me in prayer? Gracious Lord and Heavenly Father, we long to be blessed with the vision of things that prophets and people of old have longed to see.

Please give us that vision that only comes by your revelation so that we might be filled with the joy that comes through the Holy Spirit.

We pray, Father, that you might encourage us as we hear your word, that you might stir us to action, to faith and obedience. All this we pray so that you might be glorified through your Son, Jesus Christ.

Amen. I read sometime this week, last week, that we no longer work for money.

I don't know. Work for nothing. At least the interns do. Might have to turn it down. Is that okay?

[1 : 11] No? How's that? Better? Okay, better. Our project. Well, apparently, we are no longer content to work for money.

What we work for is meaning. Is meaning. If you were to choose a job, would you choose a job that's kind of meaningless, repetitive, unrewarding, but paid lots, or a job that pays moderately okay, but you get a sense of achievement?

There is a yearning, I think, in each of us for meaning, for achievement.

For those of us who are a bit older, we wrestle with those sort of questions as well too. As we reflect on our life, we wonder what it all means.

Have we wasted our life? Into this restlessness, I think God speaks to us. It's not words necessarily that we would immediately think of, but the words are something like this.

[2 : 38] Come, come, follow me. Come to me, or you are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

God's word for our restlessness is a following. It is discipleship. But significantly, to follow Jesus is to wander.

To be sent out by him into the world. To be a disciple of Jesus must be a missionary of Jesus.

It is impossible to be one and not the other. And in the context of meaning and legacy and waste, it kind of makes sense.

I was reflecting this week on the phrase, you know, you look like a man on a mission. Well, what do we mean by that? It means that someone who is not going to stop for anything, someone who's determined and focused, someone who's got a clear purpose, not to be distracted.

[3 : 56] in a wandering that is restless, purpose, a clear focus kind of makes sense. Discipleship, understandably, is God's word to us in our restless, aimless wandering.

We're spending three weeks on mission and evangelism. I'm hoping that if you have been wandering aimlessly, that through the word of God, you will find your life's ambition.

If you have started on this journey with Jesus, a follower of Jesus, but you have been distracted, then I pray that your focus would be clarified.

And I've chosen for our reflection tonight a mission of the 70 in Luke 10. It might be helpful if you turn to Luke 10 to follow just to see if what I'm saying is true.

Before we turn to Luke 10, just a reminder that Luke itself is a biography of Jesus, for that is how we come to know Jesus, through his biography. And Luke explains the purpose of his writing in chapter 1, verses 1 to 4.

[5 : 28] It is written so that Theophilus, and through him to us, we might have certainty. Certainty in a life that is not certain.

Safety for life and beyond. Of course, ironically, the following of Jesus provides neither safety nor security.

Just before our text, in chapter 9, verses 57 to 62, we read this. As they, that is Jesus and his followers, were walking along the road, a man said to him, I will follow you wherever you go. Jesus replied, foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the son of man has no place to lay his hand. He said to another man, follow me. The man replied, Lord, first let me go and bury my father.

Jesus said to him, let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God. To follow Jesus involves such an uncompromising, unyielding commitment.

[6 : 34] It is a forsaking. You cannot follow unless you forsake. It is a forsaking of everything. the security of home, the warmth of a family.

It is following Jesus into a mission, for Jesus himself is on a mission. If you go to chapter 9, 51, this is what Luke tells us about Jesus.

It's a bit of a turning point in the life of Jesus. As a time approach for him to be taken up to heaven, to glory, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.

And it follows the discussion on discipleship and mission. To follow Jesus is to follow his mission. Luke tells us that the son of man, this is in chapter 19, has come to seek and save the lost.

Well, the mission of the 70 is not the first mission that the disciples were sent on. At the beginning of chapter 9, we see that Jesus sent out the 12.

[7 : 52] And now we see that he sent out a team of 70. Slightly larger, but by no means large. Possibly slightly larger than our congregation tonight.

Really quite small, if you think of the context. They're being sent to prepare the crowds to meet Jesus. Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem, wherever he would pass.

The disciples were to go to those places to tell them about the coming of Jesus, to prepare them for the way of Jesus.

Earlier on in Luke, we see that John the Baptist was to prepare the coming of Jesus, and now the 70 is to prepare for his coming.

Jesus also gives them the content of their mission, what they are to do. Have a look at verses 9. What are the 70 to do on their mission?

[8 : 57] They are to proclaim. Jesus says in verse 8, When you enter a town and are welcome, eat what is said before you, heal the sick who are there, and tell them, the kingdom of God is near you.

Their mission is one of proclamation of the kingdom of God, of the nearness of the kingdom of God. Verse 10, When you enter a town and are not welcome, go into the streets and say, even the dust of your town that sticks to our feet, we wipe off against.

Yet be sure of this, the kingdom of God is near. Their task is one of proclamation of the nearness of the kingdom.

In other words, they are to evangelize. That's what evangelism is. It is proclaiming the news of the kingdom. I just want to go through very quickly what they are to expect from Jesus.

As they go out, they are to expect a great harvest. Verse 2, a large crop, too large for a mere 70, team of 70 to harvest.

[10 : 05] That is why they are to pray for more workers. But more significantly, it is a harvest. It would be a fruitful harvest. It is a plentiful harvest.

The context is the disciples are to go into Israel on the way to Jerusalem. Israel has been waiting waiting for the coming of their king.

Something that we will be turning our minds to in the prophet of Malachi a little bit later on. They've been waiting for him to come and save them for 400 years. Now is the time the king is coming.

The people have yearned for him to come and he has now come. Fruitfulness, of course, doesn't mean ease or safety. verse 3. Jesus says, they are going out like lamb among wolves.

I'm sure I told this story before, but I'll tell it again because it's really grotesque and gruesome. We keep chicken in our home. Our first two, sorry, rating PG, just in case.

[11 : 19] Our first two chicken, lovely chicken, great producers of eggs. One day, my wife went out to feed the chicken, only to come back into the house and say, you've got to come and see this.

I went out and there was no chicken left, just feather and a severed head. Some sort of animal got into the hutch, a fox or I don't know what it is.

Imagine if you were to throw chickens at a fox. it's not great for the chicken. This is the closest analogy. I didn't grow up on a farm.

I don't know what would happen if you put a lamb and a wolf together. I suppose there wouldn't be much of a lamb left. The mission of the 70 is not a game.

It's not a career alternative that you decided somehow when you're in 30. You know when Darren and Vanessa go off to South Africa is not a short holiday for them.

[12:27] It is perilous and it is dangerous and it is urgent. Verse 4. When they go they are not to pack sandals or even greet anyone.

Now you might not be surprised by this because when you get up in the morning and you go to work or school or whatever you don't greet anyone either. Or maybe you do but you say how are you and not wait for a response.

Can I say to you people from the east they just find that really odd. When you ask them how they are they actually expect you to listen.

In that context not greeting people is really odd. Not waiting for you know it's just rude. It's really but the context is one of urgency.

They're to be so urgent they don't have time for things like this. So the cross reference is 2 Kings 4. The time of Elisha the only son of the Shinamite woman had died and Elisha sent his servant to the woman.

[13:39] And this is what he said in verse 29. Elisha said to Gehazi tuck up your cloak into your belt take my staff in your hand and run. If you meet anyone don't greet him.

If anyone greets you don't answer. Lay my staff on the boy's face. See in that culture not greeting is unthinkable unless the task is urgent.

It is a matter of life and death. That there is no time even to stop and to greet. And so the task of the 70, the mission of the disciples of Jesus is so urgent that they are to keep moving and moving and keep announcing the news of the coming of the kingdom.

For that is why it is so urgent and important. They are to proclaim the nearness of the kingdom of God. The king is about to come.

They are the king's messengers. And Israel is given one last chance to respond to have peace, to experience peace with this king.

[14:52] They have been at war with the king. The king has now come. Amnesty and salvation and peace is possible. That is the message which the 70 is to bring.

It is a message of salvation. But of course not everyone experiences peace and salvation. For the king will come and some will say to them, like an asylum seeker, not welcome.

Keep away. Go back to where you come from. They desire no part to be with their God or the people of God and the consequences are awful.

Verses 10 to 12. For nations which reject the news of the king will be worse than Sodom and Tyre and Sidon.

I have never met a Sidonian, whatever they are, or a Sodomite, like from Sodom. These are the enemies of Israel.

[16:04] They have been destroyed. They no longer exist. For those who reject the news of the king, the kingdom of God, they will be as these nations.

This is the expectation of the 70. Well, what of the result? Verse 17. What did they report when they come back? There was great joy.

The 70 said, Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name. There was great rejoicing, for there was great success in their ministry.

It has been fruitful. There has been a great and wondrous work. The name of Jesus is indeed a name with great power, for even the demons submitted to them in the name of Jesus.

Now, the mention of Jesus might not be relevant to us, but for most part of the world, it is a real world.

[17:11] People are fearful of this dark world that exists, fearful of their misadventure caused by spiritual forces that are beyond their control.

Fearful is how people live, enslaved to this fear under the shadow of death. But according to the disciples, this dark world is now overcome in the name of Jesus.

But even more than that, verses 18 to 20, Jesus says, as the 70 priest of kingdom in the name of Jesus, he sees the vision of the Satan falling like lightning.

The stranglehold that Satan has, the power that he exerts of deception in this world, of destruction in this world, will now be finally destroyed and broken.

It is an anticipation, of course, to the cross, to what Jesus would do finally against the work of the devil. But the most curious part of this passage, and in many respects, my main point, it's taken me this long to come to this, is Jesus' own response to the report of the 70.

[18:37] For it is a curious report if you look at it. They came back rejoicing, saying, we have had great success, Lord. Imagine if St. Paul's were to report to Jesus, you know, our 2020 vision, we killed it.

Thank you, Jesus. How would you expect him to respond, well done, my good and faithful servant? No, I knew it all along.

No. Jesus says, don't rejoice. Don't rejoice that the Spirit submit to you. Don't rejoice at this manifestation of power.

I know that. What ought you to be rejoicing in? Rejoice that your names are written in heaven. What do you make of that?

As we come to the Lord in praise in the year 2020 and rejoice as his great work, his response as it were to us would be, don't rejoice at that?

[19:42] Rejoice rather that your names are written in heaven. Rather self-serving, don't you think? Perhaps Jesus is alluding to the permanence of his work.

Something greater is coming and something greater is coming. I want to suggest to you that perhaps one of the things that we need to understand is the distinction between the goal of mission and the means of mission.

I think every church that I've been to love to focus on mission activities. We pray for mission. We think about mission.

We think about all the bits and pieces. It's really, really important to such an extent that we actually think that the mission is the mission. Logically, the mission isn't the mission.

The mission is the means to get somewhere else. The journey is the journey, the process. There is an end point. There is the journey's end. There is the destination. Now, if that were the case, what is the end point, what is the journey's end for the mission of Jesus?

[21:03] What is the thing that we ought to celebrate? when we recognise that we have arrived? Come and have a look. This is only almost incidental in what Jesus says, but I think it says a lot.

In verse 22, we'll start in 21. After the response, Jesus, filled 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.

Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure. All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son 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.

Again, it's a curious prayer. Why do we need to know that? See, what Jesus has opened up our eyes to is a glimpse of the greatest reality, of the life within God himself.

See, journey's end for his mission, and for our mission, is the knowledge of God. It's to come into the very life of God, to know him, to be known by him, to love him, to be loved by him.

[22:32] To have your name written in heaven is to mean that you have fellowship with God. That is journey's end. If you like to imagine it, mission serves the sake of church.

Fellowship is the goal of mission. Although there is a recursive relationship between the two in this age. But nevertheless, fellowship, relationship with God, participating in the life of God.

Do not rejoice in the power that you have seen. Rejoice in the fact that you are in fellowship with God. You are in fellowship with God because you know who Jesus really is.

And in an age of aimless wandering, that provides the greatest security. As we struggle to find meaning and purpose in this life, to be known by God, to be loved by God, to dwell with God in that relationship of love for eternity provides the greatest security.

eternity. Well, a lot has changed since the time of the 70. They look forward to the time of what Jesus will do and they will eventually see what he has done.

[24:04] But we look back. We have seen the defeat of Satan on the cross. We have seen Jesus, having died on the cross, is offering forgiveness for all our sins.

There is no sin that is too great for him to forgive. We have seen the resurrection of our Lord. Death is now overcome.

The kingdom is assured and guaranteed. It will come again in power to bring new life.

Yes, that is different, but a lot hasn't changed. There are things that are the same. The harvest is still plentiful.

I make it a point to go and meet people in our community. You know, even though it might seem difficult, but what I see is this.

[25 : 11] I see ordinary lives dominated by fear. Somebody once said that we now live in the age of anxiety.

My understanding of anxiety is that that is the sort of almost emotional response to fear, to uncertainty. You know, as we grow in our material wealth, we are afraid of another GFC because we might just lose it all.

Ironic that the more we have, the more we fear, the more anxious we are. People of our age, our neighbours, ourselves, what we are yearning for is to be secure in the love of God, is it not?

The people 2,000 years ago on the way to Jerusalem, they are longing for God to come and save them. That is still true in our own age, in our own place.

The workers are few. 70 is simply not enough. It is also true that the name of Jesus is just as strong to save.

[26 : 28] The name to which the powers of the evil one submits to is still the same name that saves in this world.

It has not lost its power. One of the things that is apparent when you read this account is that the mission of the 70 is not the mission of the 70.

Deb has mentioned this. It is the mission of God. The 70 does not have a mission. We do not have a mission. We have a God who has a mission.

It is Jesus who has set his face to Jerusalem. It is Jesus who has come to seek and save the lost. We are simply invited to participate in this mission.

The honors belong to him. He is the one who directs, who gives us the content, the method, the expectation of this mission. It is his mission.

[27 : 30] It is the same God, the same Jesus, who is at work. It is his name that is powerful in this world. I want to tell you quite a long story. It is the story of a pastor who started a church in Canada.

I don't know where it is. The church has experienced steady decline over the years. By the time he joined the church, there is only a small group left. It was the Canadian summer.

Josh, Canadian summer. Terrible place to be, Canada. Especially church. I don't know if you guys actually come here in January, but there is no one here except everyone who come and visit our church.

In Canadian summer, this guy's church is a tiny little church, and in summertime is even worse.

During the summer holidays, there is a family visiting the church.

Just moving to the city a few months ago, wanting to find a new church. The father is a successful businessman, the wife is particularly sophisticated, they have four kids, and they've been attending a mega church in the city.

[28 : 47] Beautiful beauty, up-to-date technology, a children's program. How about that? A luxury. And this pastor realized that his little church could not match up to what they have experienced, things.

And for him, it was rather embarrassing. And to top it all off, to top it all off, you know, I was at a little church prior to this, and one of the worst things, worst things for this church is when I had to lead the music.

With my guitar. It is awful. You know, my wife said to me, after Sunday, she had to go and take a shower. It's unclean.

And this guy, his musician was away. It was a horrible experience, so he thought. And during the time of announcement, he was apologetic, he said, you know, not directly in his family, you know, normally we have more people.

Normally, there's someone who can actually play music. You know, she's doing fine, but you know, we actually have real musicians here. But anyway, he was frankly quite embarrassed by church.

[30 : 14] Nothing to offer this powerful, sophisticated people. But what surprised him the next week is that this same family turned up. And at the door, rather than, you know, blurting out, you know, welcome back, he kind of said, why did you come back?

You know, he just didn't expect it. I'm sure if he were to talk to Deb, she would say, this is not how you welcome people. But to his even greater surprise, this family kept coming back week after

week, until finally, they decided to formally join the church.

And the pastor had to ask this question, why did you decide to choose us over this amazing mega church down the road? And the man asked, look, quite frankly, I have to admit, we didn't decide to join you, we wanted to go back to the other church.

But every time we got into the car, we just ended up coming into your drive, you know, your car park. And one time I turned to my wife and I asked, why do we keep coming back when there is so much less to offer us than this other church?

And the wife's response was, because every time we come here, we meet God. Are people looking for a comfortable building?

[31 : 36] Toilets that are more permanent? Yes, and we should praise God for those things. But ultimately, what people are looking for is God.

when you come tonight, I hope that you are expecting, longing to meet with God face to face. This is God's mission, entrusted to us.

It is the gospel of Jesus Christ that we have. We have just as much God to offer as Hillsong.

And some people will say perhaps more. people's life could be just as transformed in our midst as any church in this city.

We must never be embarrassed by representing our Lord. Whether we minister to hundreds of thousands of people or to just one, it is still an enormous privilege.

[32 : 49] And let me remind you from Luke 10 that it is the same powerful name that we carry, we bear with us.

If you have the gospel of the Lord Jesus, you have the power of life and death in your hands and on your lips. Jesus says this remarkable thing in verse 16.

When they hear you, they hear me. as you go about in these cities meeting the crowd, I am going about.

To reject you is to reject me. To reject me is to reject the one who has sent me. me. I wonder if there's a restlessness in your heart, in your soul, longing to belong, longing for an identity, longing for a purpose, a cause that is worthy to invest your life in.

me. Well, Jesus' word to you is come and follow me into the world to proclaim the coming kingdom, to see the great harvest, the longing, to experience, to witness the great power in the name of Jesus.

[34 : 13] In the midst of danger, there is a great urgency for it is life and death. perhaps you need to come to Jesus to follow him for the first time.

Perhaps you have been following Jesus for quite some time, but you still feel lost. Perhaps you have been distracted from the mission. Let me suggest to you and I, perhaps what we need is to redefine our lives by the mission of God.

What does that mean? For you, for your identity, for your meaning, for your purpose, for your ambition, to be defined by nothing else because nothing else is worthy of your life.

What does it mean to be defined by the mission of God for you? the numerous things coming up in our church.

And I don't want to rush through this. I'm hoping that you have some moment tonight to think about to wrestle with your own restlessness.

[35 : 37] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.