

# Seventy Sent Out

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let's turn again for a little to the chapter we read, Luke chapter 10, the second reading. And just again, I want us to look at these first 20 verses, again by way of overview.

But we'll read at the beginning where it tells us, Luke chapter 10, verses 1 to 20, but we'll just read the first two or three verses. After this, the Lord appointed 72 others and sent them on ahead of him two by two into every town and place where he himself was about to go.

And he said to them, the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.

Go your way. Behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. We didn't read right through this chapter, but had we read through it, we would have seen there that this chapter is divided.

Somebody has beautifully divided into three sections, saying there's a threefold illustration of the Christian as they live out in this world.

[ 1 : 16 ] In the first section, which we're going to look at today, we see the Christian as an ambassador for the Lord Jesus Christ. Sent out to tell people about Jesus, as we were saying to the young folk, that we are to be witnesses of the power of the death and the resurrection and the saving power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And that's what we see here in the first section. If we had carried on reading, which we will on another occasion, we are also to be neighbors, because that's where the next section highlights, that we are to use every opportunity given to us to show mercy and compassion and to be helpful to those who are in need.

That we are not to turn away, like the, it's in the parable of the story of the Good Samaritan, we're not to turn away like the priest and the Levite, but we are to become involved with people's needs, like the Good Samaritan.

And finally, that we are to be worshippers, where we must take time, make time, to listen and to hear what the Lord has to say to us.

Now, as we say, it's the first section that I want us to look at this morning, and again, just by way of overview. And here we see this, it was like what we could say a huge evangelistic campaign, because Jesus is now journeying to Jerusalem.

[ 2 : 43 ] He has turned about, he had spent the first part in the Gospel of Luke, dealing up in places like Cana and Capernaum and the regions of Galilee.

But now he has turned direction, and he is moving towards Jerusalem. He's moving towards the cross. He knows why he's going up to Jerusalem. He's going to take a while to get there, because he's going to go into loads of towns and villages in order to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But first of all, he's sending out these people, this group of 70 or 72 people, into all the towns and villages. Two by two, he's sending them out.

And they were given special powers, because this was a special time. But the message that they were to give was the message that is the same message that we have today.

And that message is very simply, the kingdom of God has come near you. Now, of course, in a very powerful way, it had come near them, because Jesus himself is the king of the kingdom.

[ 3 : 54 ] But we are not to just look at that particular time and say, well, that's how it was 2,000 years ago. The king walked throughout these towns and villages.

It must have been amazing. And so it was, where you could actually put out your hand and touch the Lord Jesus Christ. And many people did. And many people were touched by Jesus as he interacted and dealt with them.

But Jesus is going around and about today, revealing himself through his spirit. And Jesus is told that wherever two or three, as few as that, where as few as two or three gather together in his name, that he's there in the midst to bless.

So whenever we gather or any people gather with his word in order to worship, then we are told, and the message is still the same, that the kingdom of God is near you.

And that's what makes our gatherings, when we come together like this, so special. Are we aware of that, that when we come in this way, that the kingdom of God is near you?

[ 5 : 06 ] We're not making that an exclusive claim for us here. It's the same wherever people gather around the world, and they gather in order to worship God in spirit and truth.

That is the same thing. The kingdom of God is come near you. Now, as we say, this was a special time. And just as Christ sent out the 12, remember earlier on he had sent out the 12, I think the main emphasis that has been highlighted here is the urgency of the mission.

They had to be single-minded in what they were doing. Because, you see, it's so easy to become distracted. And you and I know that. We live in a day where it becomes incredibly easy to be distracted.

They reckon that our concentration span is getting less and less. And that's probably because there are so many other influences around us and about us all the time that are seeking to distract us. But when we are particularly engaged or involved with God's word, whether it is witnessing to somebody, whether it is writing to somebody about it, whether it is teaching somebody or preaching about it, it's so easy to become distracted.

[ 6 : 28 ] When we go away to pray about it, when we pray about the work of the kingdom, it is so easy for us to be distracted. And the Lord is highlighting the urgency of it all.

And when the Lord says that they weren't to carry, carry no money bag, no knapsack, no sandals, that is extra footwear, and greet no one on the road.

Jesus wasn't setting out a principal layer for all time. This was a special time, special occasion.

Because later on, towards the end of Jesus' ministry, Jesus changed the emphasis, and he told them to take a money bag with them.

Jesus wasn't setting out a principal layer that we aren't to greet anybody on the road. Paul, in his writings, made loads of greetings to people. Peter, in his writing, told about the importance of being courteous to one another when we meet with one another.

So, when Jesus is saying, don't stop to greet anybody, you've just got to go. What Jesus is highlighting here, this was a specific mission, a specific time, where they were specifically empowered, but the emphasis here is upon the urgency of this mission.

[ 7 : 47 ] And he's saying, don't get sidetracked, don't get bogged down, don't get pulled away. You just now are on a special mission. This is to occupy all your time, all your attention.

But, you know, even although it's different today, and we are, of course, to be courteous and we are to greet one another and these things, it's still so easy for us to be sidetracked, to be taken away from what we're doing.

We've always got to remember the importance of God's word. Always got to remember how vital it is and whether you're a messenger working on behalf of the Lord or whether you are a believer living out your life wherever you are, always remember the principle to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, knowing that all the other things will be added.

But, along with the urgency of the work, we also see the responsibility that was placed upon the people and that was prayer.

And he said, verse 2, to them, the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into the harvest.

[ 9 : 13 ] And I want us to think about what Jesus is saying. He says the harvest is plentiful. You know, sometimes we can have a defeatist attitude towards the gospel. And sometimes people will say, ah, well, you know, it's a day of small things.

The Bible talks about times when it's a day of small things. Sometimes people say, ah, well, that's where we are today. We're living in a day of small things and there's no point, really, in trying to reach out and we might as well just learn to retreat and to move back.

That's the way the nation is going, further and further away. We are becoming completely secular. By and large, people have no interest, whatever, in the king or the kingdom or the message.

And we're as well just to retreat into our own wee corners and be done with it and just try and hold what we have. Well, that's not what the Lord Jesus is teaching.

He's teaching kingdom principles and he's telling us that the harvest is plentiful. There is so much work to be done and it's not to be done just by two or three people.

[10:21] Pray, he said, to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into the harvest. Have we lost sight of what the Lord is saying?

I wonder if we have. Do we take these words seriously? And are we at the throne of grace? How often do we pray to the Lord of the harvest?

It's his harvest. Do we honestly believe in our heart of hearts when the Lord is telling us that the harvest is plentiful and that there are so few laborers?

Do we really believe that? Do we? Are we looking out upon Scotland today or out upon Britain today and saying, we're finished? There's nothing that we can do. That's not what the Lord is saying to us.

He says, pray. Pray to the Lord of the harvest. Have we gone into a defeatist mode? Lord? Or are we prepared by faith to move forward and say, well, Lord, it looks grim.

[11:23] It looks dark spiritually. The climate today has completely changed. But Lord, you're still sovereign. You're still in control. You're able to change people's hearts and minds.

Remember what the Bible says. The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord. Remember that? The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord. And he can turn it whichever way he wishes.

Are we praying that the Lord will turn people's hearts, those in authority over us, those who have the rule over us? We are not to become defeatist. We are to move forward prayerfully to the Lord.

And when we pray to the Lord of the harvest, how do we pray? Do we pray so that we are willing to be used?

Or do we pray in a sort of, in a very negative way? You see, we can pray in quite a lazy way to the Lord of the harvest. And by that, I mean this. Deep down, we're saying, this is not exactly, we're not saying it with our mouth, but in our heart, and the Lord knows our heart.

[12:34] Lord, send out so many people into all the different areas and aspects of society. But deep down, you're not saying it, but deep down, actually, what you're thinking down, but don't send me.

I'm, I'll pray, but I don't want to be involved. Just leave me exactly where I am. I do not want to become in any way involved in talking, but I'll pray, Lord, to send out others.

Anybody, everybody, but not me. Well, that's not how we're to pray. Of course, the Lord isn't going to involve everybody in the same type of work, but the Lord has loads of different work, different aspects to the work for different people.

people. And that's why he equips his people with different abilities and different gifts. And we've got to be prepared to be used. And that is how we ought to pray, Lord, please, send out laborers.

And in whatever sphere or whatever role you want for me, Lord, make me willing to be used. That is how we ought to pray. Now, of course, most people do not have the financial wherewithal to support missions worldwide.

[13:59] Most people don't have the ability to write great tomes of books and to lecture to thousands of people. But the Lord gives abilities to some people like that and gives resources to some people like that to do these sort of things.

But we've got to be prepared to be used wherever in our own wee corner for the Lord. And so the Lord is saying, pray, bring this matter before me.

But Jesus also shows us that it's dangerous work. Go your way, he says. Behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. Where is the Lord sending the laborers out into?

Out into the world. Out into, in a sense, Satan's territory who is a god of this world, who has blinded so many people. And here we are into, there's the two kingdoms, the kingdom of God versus the kingdom of darkness and it's a war.

And there are these wolves waiting to devour what we would say people going out like lambs. That is why also it is so important to be praying.

[15:16] Because it is dangerous work. Satan does not like to have his kingdom threatened. Satan does not want to have one person taken out of the kingdom where he has sway and domain and be brought into the kingdom of light, into the kingdom of God.

He does not want any soul to come to peace in Jesus Christ. And he'll do anything and everything that he can to prevent that. And so, he will often make life difficult for the messengers. he will make life difficult for those who are involved in the work of the kingdom. And that's why we've got to pray. Many people think, if you're, just say for instance, if you're a minister, you never get bothered by Satan.

It's alright for you. It's a very reverse. The more that you are involved in the work, the more you're on a target for the enemy. He will do anything and everything to shut your mouth.

Anything and everything to put down your pen. Anything and everything to prevent you from proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ. And that is why it is so important to be involved in prayer.

[16:28] You find in the early church that when the leaders went out, they were dependent, yes, upon the Lord, but dependent upon those who were involved with them, the church that was praying.

Paul, writing to the church in Corinth, for instance, he says, you're working with me. As we're going out, he was so conscious of them praying, the church praying for him.

He said, you're co-workers, you are working with me. Okay, I'm at the forefront, I'm doing the speaking, but you're praying, and you're praying as you pray to the Lord, he in turn is answering your prayers by supporting me and opening doors for the gospel to prosper.

And then again, as we look at this, we find that the messengers, as they go out, the message that Jesus gives them is very similar almost to the message that you would find Israel as they were conquering the land of promise and as they were moving from city to city.

They used to come to those cities that were far away, and as they came to the city, they would say, right, two options. We have come here to offer you terms of peace.

[17:46] If you accept our terms of peace, you will all be safe. You will join with us, you will become our servants. You will come to live amongst us, but the terms of peace, we will never hurt you or harm you, in fact, we will defend you.

If they accepted that, that's what happened. If they rejected the offer of peace, then they brought judgment and destruction upon themselves, and Israel would then fight against them and destroy them.

And you know, it's quite similar what Jesus is saying as he sends them into all the towns and villages, he's saying, bring to them the offer of peace. Bring the message of peace, because Jesus is the prince of peace.

peace. And whatever town or city or village accepted them, they were to go there and they were to bring this message of peace. The towns and the villages had refused their message of peace.

See what they were to do. 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, we wipe off against you.

[19:06] Nevertheless, know this, that the kingdom of God has come near. And then we find these quite incredible words from Jesus in verse 12.

And he says, I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town. See what Jesus is saying. It's an incredibly serious thing to reject the message of peace that Jesus gives.

In fact, it is the most serious thing that any person can do. Because if we know our Bibles, we remember what God did to Sodom and the judgment where the fire and God's, the fire and brimstone came down from heaven and destroyed these cities of the plain, Sodom and Gomorrah. But there is going to yet come a great day of judgment where all will be brought before the Lord. And on that day, Jesus is saying, it's actually going to be more bearable for the people who lived in Sodom on that day than those who heard the gospel and rejected it.

Those who were offered the message of Christ's peace and said, no, we don't want it. Those who were offered the king to be the king of their lives and said, we will not have this man rule over us.

[20:36] So Jesus is saying, I tell you. It can't be simpler than that. It cannot be more direct. And you know, that puts, when I was reading that, I just thought, what a responsibility it places upon those who proclaim the truth.

Because, as you reflect on this, the emphasis is not to be upon brilliant originality. It's not to be so that you will make people go out and say, wow, I never really thought about these things.

We're not to come here and present our own ideas or our own fancy. The importance is to make us clear and as plain as is possible what the Lord Jesus Christ is saying to us.

Because you and I have to answer for the words of Christ and I will also have to answer for how I have tried to proclaim it.

Did I try to conceal the truth? If not, I will be judged. I will be held responsible for trying to conceal the truth. The truth has to be made as plain and as clear and as simple before every passion.

[ 22 : 03 ] So that preacher and hearer alike stand responsible before the Lord for what they have done with this truth. That's really what is being said here.

And it puts so much responsibility upon us. And Jesus then goes on and he gives woes against three cities that had tremendous privileges.

The cities there of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. Jesus did mighty works there. He lived there. He walked the streets there.

He interacted with the people there. He healed. He did mighty miracles. He taught them the way of life. He showed them that he was the way of life. And yet so many rejected him.

Or some believed in him. But many rejected him. And that's why Jesus is saying to them that it would be more tolerable or more bearable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you.

[ 23 : 07 ] I wonder what the Lord is saying over Stornoway. When you think of all the privileges, all the opportunities that we have, where people have been influenced in many different ways by the gospel, it is a solemn thing to know the truth and to reject it.

And then Jesus says the one who rejects you that's what he's saying to those who are going out. If people reject you, they're actually not just rejecting you, they're rejecting me.

And more than that, they are rejecting God the Father who sent me. So the rejection is not just against a message. So that if a person comes under the gospel and says, oh well, I don't want to listen to what that person is saying.

There's a ripple effect all the way back to the Father. one of rejection all the way. It's not just rejecting the preacher. It's rejecting Christ.

It's rejecting the Father. So you see how solemn it is to reject this word. And then finally we see the 72 return and they're so excited in the report.

[ 24 : 21 ] And they say to Jesus, Lord, even the demons are subject to your name. And Jesus says three things to them. And the first thing he says, he saw Satan fall from heaven.

Now, whether Jesus is here speaking about what he, like as if he had been given a vision, a spiritual vision to what was happening, while they had been given this authority to go out to preach and to heal, and that Jesus was as it were given this spiritual vision of seeing the kingdom of darkness being hit, or if the Lord is here speaking about what he had seen before, and it could be both, and in all probability, definitely what is here is what the Lord Jesus as the second person of the God had been witness to, where he saw Satan fall from heaven, because you remember how Satan and many angels were cast out, where they didn't keep their first estate.

But Jesus says in light of that, don't be surprised because of the success that you have had, because the kingdom of darkness has already been hit.

And I think it is possible, and many people think this, that there's a warning in it as well against pride. Because they come back and they're full of joy and they say, Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name.

and he said to them, I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority. It's not something they worked up in themselves.

[ 26 : 07 ] And Jesus, I think, here is warning because it was pride that had Satan cast out of heaven, where he wanted, where he was lifted up in himself, wanted to be equal with God, wanted the place of God.

And he's what Jesus is saying, I saw Satan cast out. You be careful in case you get puffed up with pride. And then, second thing, Christ is reminding them that the authority and power that they had was not their own.

It was something that was given to them. And the third thing that Jesus is saying, and again, that's why I am quite convinced that there is a warning against pride, is that while they were rejoicing at seeing the results that their service brought about, Jesus is saying, while that service is great, your rejoicing should be in something even greater.

It's not in your service you should be rejoicing, but in your status. And what is your status? That your names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. In other words, that I have saved you. That's what you should be rejoicing in. And so you see where that takes, pride has no place, pride is removed. And I think that might be part of what Jesus is saying here.

[ 27 : 29 ] If your name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life, that is the ultimate cause of rejoicing. Well, you make sure today you seek the Lord, and you say to yourself, how do I know if my name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life?

We know that by seeking it, and we will know that by finding it. And when we have found Jesus, or to put it more theologically correctly, when Jesus has found us, and he finds us by creating an interest in us, by bringing a desire in our heart for him.

Because he is a great shepherd who goes out to take his sheep home one by one, his lambs and his sheep, bring them into himself, as he says, other sheep I have, that's what he said long ago, other sheep I have, who are not of this fold, but he's going to get them in.

He's not going to miss anyone. If any of you have sheep, I'm sure there are times that you've gone out looking for them, and you've come back, and you've lost one. You've never met a farmer, or a shepherd, or a crofter, who at the end of their days will say, you know, I never ever lost a lamb or a sheep.

You may have a great success rate with lambs and sheep, but you'll still lose one here and there, whether it's by death, or whether it's just gone missing, or whatever. But Jesus, that's never happened with him, never.

[ 28 : 54 ] He is the great shepherd. When you go to him, and find in him the safety, and the security, and the offer of peace. To experience the offer, to experience the reality of this peace, the message of peace that is being brought, you have to accept the Prince of Peace, Jesus, as your Savior.

Let us pray.