

Messengers of Jesus

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[0 : 0 0] me in your Bibles to Luke chapter 10. If you're looking in one of the pew Bibles, it is page 815. Last week we concluded our series in Messianic prophecies from Isaiah, and today we are starting a series in the middle section of the Gospel of Luke. Chapters 10 through 19 will be journeying through this section of Luke from now until Easter Sunday. We've entitled this series With Jesus on the Road of Discipleship. If you see one of these blue cards in the row in front of you, that lists the text that we'll be looking at from week to week. If that's helpful for you to take, feel free to take one home with you and spend some time reading and meditating on these words beforehand as a way of preparing for worship. But this morning we're looking at chapter 10, verses 1 to 24. So I'm going to read these words to us. Luke chapter 10, beginning at verse 1.

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. Carry no money bag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, Peace be to this house. And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him, but if not, it will return to you. And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house. Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick in it and say to them, The kingdom of God has come near to you. 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. Nevertheless, know this, that the kingdom of God has come near. I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town. Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more bearable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades. The one who hears you, hears me. And the one who rejects you, rejects me. And the one who rejects me, rejects him who sent me.

The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, 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've given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven. In the same hour, Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.

All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

[3 : 51] Then turning to the disciples, he said privately, blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see and did not see it, and to hear what you hear and did not hear it.

Are we there yet? Anyone who has ever taken a long car trip with young children knows those words well. Two summers ago, before we had a third child, we drove to Wisconsin.

Our most ambitious journey ever, over summer vacation, the first day we planned to leave after church on a Sunday and drive for 12 hours till Indiana.

An hour and a half into our trip, we found ourselves in bumper-to-bumper traffic on the Tappan Zee Bridge, and it wasn't the kids. It was the adults who were saying to each other, how much longer will this be, and why exactly did we embark on this journey anyway?

In the course of the Christian life, I think we can sometimes find ourselves asking a similar question. As we seek to walk with Jesus through this present age toward the hope of eternal glory, sometimes we ask, are we there yet?

[5 : 09] How much longer will it be? The section of Luke we'll be looking at over the next four months is called the Journey to Jerusalem. If you look at chapter 9, verse 51 and 53, it says twice that Jesus set His face toward Jerusalem.

Now, that phrase might ring a bell because it comes from Isaiah 50, which we looked at two weeks ago. Isaiah described a servant of the Lord who would set His face like flint, who would obey without flinching, who would suffer without deserving to, and who would ultimately triumph over His adversaries.

And it's very likely that Jesus consciously understood His own vocation, His own calling in light of passages like that one we looked at from Isaiah. So, we see Jesus here heading toward His final destination of Jerusalem with resolute confidence, determined to obey the will of God, aware that He would suffer for His obedience, but also trusting that there in Jerusalem He would triumph.

But the surprising thing is, as determined as Jesus is to head toward Jerusalem, it takes Him quite a long time, at least in the way Luke tells the story, for Him to get there.

It takes all the way to chapter 19. Almost half the book is this journey to Jerusalem. And several times in this section, Luke says, 9.57, they were going along the road.

[6 : 40] 10.38, as they went on their way. 11.53, as He went away from there. 13.22, He went on His way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem.

And the way Luke tells the story almost provokes us as the hearers to ask the question, when are we going to get there? Why is this journey taking so long?

But as we look at these chapters over the next four months, I want us to remember this. When we're walking with Jesus, the destination is essential, but the journey matters too.

If you're trusting Jesus to be your Savior and Lord, your destination, your spiritual destination for all eternity is secure. You're headed toward the right place to be with Him.

But trusting Jesus as Savior and Lord also means trusting Him at every step of the journey. Trusting that He's teaching us. Trusting that He's leading us.

[7 : 43] Trusting that He's with us. Trusting that He's sanctifying every step of our earthly journey. And what we're going to see over the next four months is how in the course of His journey to Jerusalem, Jesus takes every opportunity to teach His disciples.

To shape and form them into the people that He wants them to become. Because they would become His earthly representatives after His ascension.

Right? Jesus is determined to reach His destination, but He's also determined to take advantage of every step along the journey to teach His disciples what they need to know.

And who they need to become. And in a similar way, God is determined that every follower of Jesus reach our destination. But sometimes it's a long journey.

And there's a lot of things He wants to teach us along the way. So that's what's ahead of us in the next few months as we embark on this series with Jesus on the road of discipleship.

[8 : 46] This morning in particular, we're looking at Luke 10, where Jesus sends out 72 others. In chapter 9, He had sent out the 12 apostles on a sort of missionary excursion journey.

And here He sends out a larger group. Jesus had 12 apostles who were sort of His closest disciples. But He also had many other dedicated and devoted disciples that we see, for example, here.

Verse 1 says, Jesus sent out these 72 ahead of Him into every town and place where He Himself was about to go. So they're performing a function a bit like John the Baptist.

Sort of the advance guard. Prepare the way for the King. Verse 1 to 16, we see Jesus' instructions as He sends them out. Verse 17 to 24, we see Jesus' response when they return.

Now there are many ways one could summarize this passage. But this morning I want to focus on three characteristics that Jesus is building in the 72.

[9 : 51] And three characteristics that we need as followers of Jesus as we embark on the journey of this new year. And the characteristics are humility, confidence, and joy.

Humility, verses 1 to 7. Confidence, verses 8 to 16. Joy, verses 17 to 24. That's what we're going to look at this morning. So first, humility, verses 1 to 7.

Consider Jesus' instructions to the 72 in these verses. Right? Some of the specific directions He gives them. First, they're not to go it alone. He says two by two.

Jesus sends them out together for companionship, for protection, for accountability, for unity, as they bear witness to Him. Verse 2, they're to pray.

Before Jesus tells them to go, He tells them to pray. Independence on God. Verse 3, they're to be simple and sincere as lambs in the midst of wolves.

[10 : 57] Wolves probably representing the hostile opposition. Verse 4, they're to travel light. Verse 5 and 6, they're to offer peace to all.

They're not to try to guess in advance who will receive them and who will reject them, but everyone receives the same offer. Verse 7 and 8, they're to receive hospitality but not abuse it.

That's why Jesus says, eat and drink whatever they provide. That is, don't complain. But then He says, don't go from house to house. In other words, no freeloaders. No mooching. In a word, the messengers of Jesus are to be humble.

Humility is making much of Jesus and less of ourselves. Sometimes the word humility is misunderstood. Being humble does not mean being shy, mumbling, looking down at the floor all the time.

It doesn't mean constantly talking about how bad you are or never expressing your real feelings. No, none of that is what humility is really about. Humility is expressed in these qualities.

[12 : 09] Being prayerful, being peaceful, being simple and sincere. Not violent, not self-seeking, not manipulative, not pretentious.

Humility is simply recognizing who we are before God. And living before the presence of God. Now, some of you might say, okay, I see the main point.

Humility, that's fair. But what about these details? Don't we apply these verses rather selectively? Some of these verses are frequently quoted.

Verse 2, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out labors into his harvest. If you hear a sermon about the world mission of the church, you might hear that verse quoted. Or verse 8, eat what is set before you.

Right? That's a parent favorite. Probably almost all of us have quoted that to our children in one form or another at some time. But others are less fashionable.

[13 : 12] How about verse 4? The modern equivalent of verse 4 would be, don't carry a wallet or purse. Don't carry a backpack. Walk barefoot. And don't say hi to anybody that you pass by.

Now, a few Christians throughout history, like Francis of Assisi or Teresa of Avila, have insisted on going barefoot and living in poverty in an attempt to literally put into practice this command.

But most of us read verse 4. We decide it doesn't sound very practical. And therefore, it must not apply to us. Our reasoning is, verse 2 sounds good, so I'll quote it.

Verse 7 helps me with my children, so I'll quote that too. Verse 4 sounds bad, so I'll ignore it. But as some non-believers have rightly pointed out, that is not a very consistent or compelling way to interpret Scripture.

We have to have a better way of interpreting Scripture than that. Now, common sense is a gift from God. We shouldn't throw it away. Common sense can sometimes protect us from doing foolish things out of a misguided zeal.

[14 : 20] But we can't simply let our individual and cultural instincts have the final say in how we interpret and apply the Bible either.

If we only put into practice the commands that sound good or seem useful to us already, and we disregard the ones that sound impractical or difficult, then we're just using Scripture in a self-serving way to be a sort of microphone for our own desires.

But God has given us the Scripture not only to comfort us and strengthen us and encourage us, but also to challenge us and correct us even at the deepest level.

And so if Jesus is truly Lord over our lives, we need to be willing to take to heart the hard sayings of Scripture and not just the ones that we like instinctively. So how do we wisely interpret and apply a passage like this?

Well, first of all, we need to step back and remind ourselves, what are we reading here? We're not reading Jesus' instructions to all of His followers in all times and at all places.

[15 : 34] No, we're reading Jesus' instructions to 72 of His followers who had a specific job preparing for His journey back in the day.

They were sort of the advanced publicity team, if you want to put it that way, announcing His coming. And later on in Luke 22, 36, Jesus explicitly revises some of these commands.

In that verse, He says, Now take a money bag and a knapsack, if you've got one, and even a sword. We can interpret that another day. Okay?

So on the one hand, Jesus' instructions to the 72 are just that, His instructions to the 72. But on the other hand, we still follow the same Jesus who gave them all these instructions.

And to the extent that these instructions express Jesus' unchanging character, and the character He consistently requires of His followers, we can and should rightly apply them to ourselves.

[16 : 38] Or here's another way to put it. What's the Gospel of Luke? It's the story of how Jesus fulfilled the promises that God had made to His people Israel in the Old Testament.

It's one part of the larger story that we read in the whole Bible. It begins with the story of creation, and then the fall, and then God calling a people Israel, and then the Gospel is God fulfilling the promises that He had made to Israel in the person of His Son, Jesus.

But that chapter of the story has been finished. Jesus has died. He has risen. He has ascended into heaven. And we live in the next chapter of God's unfolding story, which begins in the book of Acts, when Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to empower His followers to proclaim His salvation to the ends of the earth.

So, as we read through the Gospel of Luke, our goal is not to imitate everything that the disciples do in the Gospels. Our goal is to faithfully bear witness in our words and in our deeds to all that God has accomplished in Jesus, to let our stories be an echo of His story.

Now, in the storyline of Luke, the sending out of the 72 actually anticipates the next chapter in the story. It points forward to... It's sort of a miniature version of what's going to happen in the book of Acts on a much larger scale.

[18 : 12] The worldwide mission of the church. That's probably why Jesus appointed 72 in the first place. Now, some translations, if you have a King James Version, it says 70.

Or a New American Standard says 70. If you have an ESV or an NIV, it says 72. And you might say, well, why the different numbers here? Either way, it's almost certainly a deliberate reference to the nations of the world that are listed in Genesis 10.

So, the Hebrew text of Genesis 10 lists 70 nations, representing the entire world. The Greek translation of Genesis, which was popular in Jesus' day, because many people spoke Greek, lists 72 nations.

That may be why some of the manuscripts of Luke say 70 and some say 72, because there's different copies, because it's about half and half. We're not quite sure what was the original number, but either way, 70, 7 times 10, or 72, 6 times 12, represents the world in its fullness.

And so, what we see here in Luke 10 is a tiny little preview of the message about Jesus going from all nations to all nations. Now, here it's just a small representative people, a group of people within Israel going to the towns of Israel.

[19 : 34] But what we're going to see in the book of Acts is that Jesus' messengers are people from all nations going to all nations. So, the question we need to ask ourselves is not, how do we obey Jesus' instructions to the 72?

But does the way we carry ourselves as followers of Jesus today point to that same Jesus who gave these instructions back then?

So, that's a big picture of sort of how do we interpret the Gospels. Keep that in mind over the next few months as we journey through Luke. But getting back to the main point, the first point here, do our lives reflect the humility that Jesus calls for in verses 1 to 7?

It's not just here that Jesus calls His disciples to humility. It's the first of the Beatitudes. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Over and over, Jesus says, The greatest among you must be like the least. The one who leads like the one who serves. Without humility, there is no way to faithfully bear witness to Jesus apart from a growing humility.

[20 : 48] And I think some of these characteristics can point us to expressions of humility. Are we people who walk two by two? That is, side by side with other Christians.

That's why so many of the commands in the New Testament epistles include the words, one another. Love one another. Serve one another. Pray for one another. Bear one another's burdens.

Teach one another. Admonish one another. Encourage one another. Don't be a lone ranger Christian, unattached and unaccountable.

It's not the way Jesus intended His followers to live, here or ever. Are we people of earnest prayer? As Jesus encourages in verse 2, and as Jesus encourages in chapter 11, which we'll get to in a couple weeks with the Lord's Prayer.

Come to adult Sunday school this month as a way to come together in prayer. Spend time learning about prayer and spend time praying with one another. Are we straightforward?

[21 : 56] Are we sincere and unpretentious like verse 3 talks about? Again, this is not confined to this passage. The Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 1.12, Our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience that we behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity.

Can the world look at us and say, You guys are the real deal. You're not faking it. You're not putting on a show. You're not in it for personal gain.

Have we forsaken all forms of manipulation and greed? I think that's partly why Jesus tells the disciples not to take anything with them on this first mission.

So they won't be tempted to use their worldly possessions in manipulative ways. No. No. All they have is the message and the character that Jesus has given them.

Do we offer the gospel to everyone? As here, they're supposed to offer peace to everyone. Or rather than judging people in advance, based on how we think they'll respond. We get into all kinds of trouble when we judge people in advance.

[23 : 21] And Jesus says the offer is the same, whether people accept it or reject it. You haven't failed if you offer something to someone and they reject it. No, you've been faithful. Do we receive help and hospitality without complaining and without taking advantage of people?

See, all of those are marks of humility. They're all expressions of godly humility. And humility is so foundational in the Christian life.

We have to begin here. That's the first point. Jesus is building humility in his followers.

But second, Jesus not only builds humility in his followers, he also builds confidence. We see this in verse 8 to 16. Now, in these verses, we see that Jesus' followers, like Jesus himself, will experience both acceptance and rejection.

Do you notice that? We've seen that already in verse 6. If a person of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. If not, it will return to you. Verse 8 and 10, when you enter a town and they receive you.

[24 : 39] Verse 10, whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you. Jesus is not a naive optimist. He's upfront. He's upfront. Not everyone will receive him and his message.

At the same time, he's not a despairing pessimist. Not everyone will reject it either. It's not fruitless. And sometimes, he says, the ones who seem most likely to receive it end up rejecting it, and the ones who seem most likely to reject it end up receiving it.

That's the point of verse 13 to 15. Jesus declares woe on Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum. So these were all towns on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee, which was sort of the home territory where Jesus and his disciples spent most of their time.

Now, Philip and Peter and Andrew were from Bethsaida. Jesus lived for a while in Capernaum. But Jesus says, for the most part, those towns, his sort of home base, if you will, would not receive his message.

They would not be very open to it in general. And by contrast, Jesus says, Tyre and Sidon, now those were towns that were sort of notorious for their wickedness and oppression.

[26 : 01] They were denounced by the Old Testament prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel. Jesus says those towns would have repented. The implication is, some of the places you go, you think it's the least likely place that someone will ever be receptive to anything about Christianity, and they welcome you with open arms.

And you go to some other places and you think, of course, this is our home territory. Of course, people are going to be open to Jesus. And they say, yeah, we've already heard all that already.

We're not interested. And we see that, of course, in the book of Acts. The gospel of Jesus takes root in the most unlikely of places.

And in verse 16, Jesus reminds us why faithful followers of Jesus will experience both acceptance and rejection.

He says, because we represent him. The one who hears you, hears me. The one who rejects you, rejects me. The one who rejects me, rejects him who sent me.

[27 : 12] So one writer put it this way, he leads us. Our mission is Christ's mission. When we are persecuted, he encourages, supports, and protects us.

When we preach, he preaches. When we are heard, he is heard. When we are rejected, he is rejected. Our salvation comes only from him. Jesus says, if we are being faithful to him, we will experience both acceptance and rejection.

Now, of course, Christians can behave in ways that are foolish and unfaithful and experience rejection for that reason.

We're not talking about that. Jesus is saying, faithful followers of Jesus will experience acceptance and rejection. So here's a question for us. How do we maintain a steady confidence, a level-headed conviction in the face of both acceptance and rejection?

That's what Jesus is building in his disciples here. You know, I think for us, I think sometimes people's acceptance can tempt us to become big-headed instead of level-headed.

[28 : 29] All right? If everyone speaks well of us, when a Christian ministry is outwardly successful, when many people come to faith in Christ, when people look at you and say, oh, how good you are, how respectable you are, how wonderful your family is, we can be tempted to take all credit for ourselves rather than to give all praise to God.

We can be tempted to become more concerned about always having a good appearance so that everyone always speaks well of us rather than being genuine and truthful about our weaknesses as well as our strengths.

We can be tempted to make it our goal to always please everyone and meet all their felt needs and tell them everything they want to hear. We can even fall into the trap of thinking that we have become someone's Savior, that they need us, rather than pointing them to Jesus.

But notice how Jesus commands His messengers to act when people receive them in verses 8 and 9. First He says, eat what is set before you.

In other words, receive from those who receive your message. And then He says, heal the sick.

[29 : 49] In other words, give generously. Do all that is in your power to help people physically, spiritually, whatever that looks like. You see, if you tell someone about Jesus and they become a Christian, you have not become their Savior.

You're simply a messenger of the King. Or as somebody said it, one beggar telling another beggar where to get some food. It's a good way to think of ourselves.

Now, you're both fellow citizens of the kingdom of God. And over time, you may well have as much to learn from someone that you lead to Christ as you have to give and teach to them.

There's a partnership that is established. That's one of the great things about being a Christian. Sometimes you become a mentor to a younger Christian, and three years later, you find that they're mentoring you.

They're speaking into your life. They're challenging you. They're praying for you. They're standing beside you, and you thought that you were helping them. And God says, oh yeah, I always meant to go both ways.

- [31 : 04] But sometimes, people's rejection or the fear of people's rejection can tempt us in other ways. And perhaps that's the main challenge Jesus is preparing His disciples to face here, because He talks quite a bit about rejection.

Sometimes when we fear rejection or when we've experienced rejection, sometimes we're tempted to deny or back away from difficult truths of the gospel. But do you notice that the message Jesus tells His disciples to proclaim doesn't change based on people's reaction to it?

Verse 9 and verse 11. Verse 9 tells them what to say when people accept them. The kingdom of God has come near to you. Verse 11 tells them what to say when people reject them.

Know this, that the kingdom of God has come near. The message is the same. King Jesus, right, they're saying, King Jesus is right around the corner.

Come to Him. He's the world's true Lord. We're not saying Jesus is coming. We're saying He has come. He's died. He's risen again. And He will come again.

- [32 : 24] He is the true Lord of the world. He's the true Lord of the world. So we need to be courageous and truthful in speaking the truth.

I think another temptation, if we face rejection or if we've been mistreated, sometimes Christians can be tempted to take revenge in one way or another, to hold grudges, to see whole groups of people in negative ways.

Look back at chapter 9, verse 52. It says, Jesus sent messengers ahead of Him who went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make preparations for Him.

But the people did not receive Him because His face was set toward Jerusalem. And when His disciples, James and John, saw it, they said, Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?

But He turned and rebuked them and they went on to another village. Jesus says, no, your job is not to take revenge on people who hurt you.

- [33 : 46] It's not to make sure that they pay. What does Jesus say to the 72? If they don't receive you, wipe the dust off your feet.

That was a symbolic gesture in the ancient world that in some ways was sort of giving a warrant, warning people that they were making a deeply wrong choice. But then Jesus says, keep it moving.

Don't get in, don't stand there and get in a public argument and yell at each other. Don't stand there and get in a public argument and yell at each other. Don't go on social media and rant. Right?

That's sometimes how Christians take revenge today. You blast somebody on Facebook. Before you post something on social media, you need to ask, is Jesus pleased with what I am saying?

Have I said it to this person's face? Especially before you post it publicly. the apostle Paul wrote this in Romans 12.

- [34 : 52] He says, if possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. And then he says, beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God.

For it is written, vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord. To the contrary, if your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink, for by so doing, you will heap burning coals on his head.

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. That's how the Bible teaches us to deal with rejection, is by overcoming evil with good, with truth and righteousness and faithfulness to God.

So in the phase of both acceptance and rejection, Jesus urges his disciples to maintain a steady confidence. Now before we go on to the third point, let me give a brief challenge to you if you're not a Christian.

You might have noticed back in verse 1, Jesus is referred to as the Lord. And then verse 2, Jesus says, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers.

[36 : 10] And in verse 3, he says, behold, I am sending you. So Jesus says, I'm sending out laborers. I hear and answer prayer.

I am the Lord God himself. Did you notice that? Now you might say, well, what's my point in saying that? Well, sometimes you can learn what somebody really believes by listening to their offhand comments.

You hear someone, they're not trying to prove something. They say it as if they assume it, but they're not trying to prove it. Jesus is not trying to prove his divine nature in verses 2 and 3, but he certainly assumes it.

Or look down at verse 22. All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

In other words, Jesus claims to have an absolutely unique relationship with God the Father. Now, some scholars say, ah, we can disregard such statements.

[37 : 23] They were just added later on by Christians. Jesus never actually said anything like this. But here's a problem. Verse 22 appears not only here in Luke, but also in Matthew chapter 11.

And the most skeptical New Testament scholars say that the material found in both Matthew and Luke, but not Mark, sometimes known as Q, is some of the earliest source material we have in the New Testament.

So even if you're working off a rather skeptical account of how the New Testament got put together, verses like this one are the earliest ones, not the latest ones.

So here's the point. You can see this in almost any chapter of the New Testament of the Gospels. Jesus believed that he was God. Was he right?

Or was he wrong? If he was right, you should worship him and devote your entire life to following him. If he was wrong, you probably shouldn't trust anything else he says.

[38 : 34] There's not really a sensible middle ground. If you respect Jesus' moral teachings and his example, you need to wrestle with his belief that he was God and say, was he right or was he wrong?

So first, Jesus teaches us humility. Second, Jesus gives us confidence. And third, and finally, he shares with us joy. Verse 17, the 72 returned with joy.

Because their mission had met with an unexpected success. Even the demons are subject to us in your name. Verses 18 and 19, Jesus affirms that what they're saying is true.

He says, Satan's kingdom is on its way down. Perhaps Jesus is saying that Satan is being defeated as his messengers cast out demons in his name. Perhaps he's envisioning Satan's ultimate downfall and saying this is the beginning of that.

Either way, Jesus' disciples have authority over Satan and demons when they call upon his name. That is, when they rely upon and call upon the power and authority and character of Jesus.

[39 : 57] That's what his name means. His power and authority and character. And Jesus has promised to protect us from anything that could truly, eternally harm us.

Spiritual protection and spiritual power. power. These are privileges for all of Jesus' followers. It's not just the power that the twelve apostles had.

These weren't the twelve apostles. It's not just a promise that Jesus made to people who are alive in his day. And it's not only for Christians who attend Pentecostal and charismatic churches.

Jesus says in verse 20, the spirits are subject to you. That applies to all of his followers. Now, I am not an expert in casting out demons.

Some people have far more experience in that area than I do. Some people claim to have experience in that area and they are unbalanced and untrustworthy. But don't throw the baby out with the bathwater.

[41 : 00] If you're being afflicted by a demon, we will confidently call upon the name of Jesus and command the demon to leave. That might not be the only thing we'll do. We might do some biblical counseling.

We might pray for inner healing. We might tell you to go see a medical doctor. God can work in all those ways. We shouldn't rule out any of them in principle. But as Jesus followers, we have power over Satan and demons in Jesus' name.

But having said that, in verse 20, Jesus says, that's not the deepest source of our joy. Don't rejoice in this that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.

Our abiding joy comes not from our present successes or from the experience of spiritual power, God's power working through us, but from our secure salvation.

Do you notice how the 72 are talking? Even the demons are subject to us in your name. The content of their statement is true.

[42 : 11] The tone, I think, is a little bit off. I think that's why Jesus corrects them. They seem to be a little too excited about the power that they're exercising.

And Jesus redirects them like a parent wisely redirects a child. He says, let me give you three things to really rejoice about.

Your names are written in heaven. Verse 20. Is your name written in heaven in the book of God? Some people give millions of dollars to have their name etched on a building that might possibly outlast them a hundred years if it's not destroyed or renamed by then.

But if your name is written in God's book, you have a reason to rejoice. Because it will never be crossed out.

Verse 21 and 22, Jesus says, rejoice that God has revealed His truth to you. Here Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit. He turned to His Father in thanksgiving. Why? Because the plan which the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit had conceived from all eternity was now coming to pass.

[43 : 22] It wasn't the wise and understanding that is the people who thought they knew all that they needed to know who were seeing Jesus.

It was little children. Again, humility. Little children seeing Jesus. And Jesus is saying all of His disciples are like little children who see something and they're so excited about it because it's so amazing.

And Jesus delights in that as a parent looks at their child and delights in them. You see, Jesus' disciples can see not because we're wiser, not because we're smarter, not because we're better, not because we're more qualified or more disciplined or anything.

We have nothing to boast about except that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit have delighted to reveal God's truth to us. rejoice.

Your names are written in heaven. Rejoice. God has revealed His truth to you. Rejoice. Verse 23 and 24 that the fulfillment of the ages has come. Jesus says, you are seeing what people for generations have longed for and hoped for.

[44 : 43] When the wise men came and followed that star all the way to see the child Jesus, said, finally, after their long journey, the star stopped over the place where the child lay.

And when they saw the star, it says, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. Because they had seen the one that people had been waiting for for years.

Do we realize what a privilege it is to live on this side to live on this side of Jesus coming to earth and dying on the cross for our sins and rising from the dead and we can look back on that and see God is faithful to His promises.

God has done exactly what we need. And we can see it. Other people just had to take God's word for it and trust that it would happen in the future. And we can look back and see it has happened.

That's a reason to rejoice. Brothers and sisters, whatever the journey that you are on in this new year, may God fill us with humility, confidence, and joy.

[46 : 02] Let's pray. Father, we thank You that You have delighted to reveal Yourself to us through Your Son, Jesus Christ.

We pray that You would shape our character, that we would become more and more people of humility before You, people with confidence in the face of acceptance or rejection and above all people of joy.

people who rejoice in the things that cannot be taken away from us, that our names are written in Your book, that You've opened our eyes to see You and delight in You, and that the fulfillment of the ages has come.

Lord, fill us with all that we need to be Your messengers, Your representatives, Your disciples, in this year to come, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.