

Missions and the Incarnation
Luke 10:1-24 December 23, 2012

***Dismiss kids to TS (no Commuter Kids)

Turn to page 868.

Christmas is one of my favorite times of the year. I love listening to Christmas **music** (Elvis - I'll have a blue..., Dean Martin - Baby it's cold outside..., The Beach Boys, Jackson 5 - Santa Clause is coming to town). I love **shopping**. I know guys; I'm weird. I've always enjoyed shopping and buying presents for my friends and family. I'm one of the best bargain hunters. I love time with **family**. Growing up as a child, we would always visit both sets of grandparents on Christmas day and I have many fond memories of these times. My grandparents on my dad's side of the family have both passed away now but my grandparents on my mom's side are both still alive (Papa and Mama Simmons). Papa Simmons lives on a large piece of land in South Carolina that used to have a farm on it with cows and horses and pecan trees. Do any of you enjoy pecans? I always remember playing in the yard on Christmas day and him usually sending us out with buckets to harvest all of the pecans that were on the ground. Some years the the entire ground was covered with pecans, so much so that he needed our help to harvest them all. When I see him this week he'll probably have a bag of pecans for me along with some fig preserves. Can you imagine Papa Simmons now as a 90 year old man looking out his window and seeing all of the pecans ready to be harvested but him not being able to gather them all. What a waste.

Transition: When we come to Luke 10, we see Jesus with this same concern yet it's not about pecans, it's about people. He looks out over the crowds and has compassion for people but sees very few laborers. "The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few." So we're going to read about Jesus sending out 72 disciples on a mission. But what does the mission of God have to do with Christmas and the birth of Christ? Everything. Each of the Gospels have a Great Commission charge at the end of them but they all differ slightly. The charge at the end of John goes like this: "Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you" (John 20:21 ESV; cf. 10:3). God sent Jesus as a part of his mission to redeem and save sinners through his life, death, and resurrection and now we enter into this mission as we proclaim the good news of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. In other words, "Go, tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born."

The point: The need is great for disciples to labor on mission for God.

I. Disciples Labor on Mission with Urgency (10:1-12).

Context: 10:57-62, especially 60: "But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." **Read 10:1-12**

Explanation:

- "Others" - these are in addition to the 12 disciples which he had already sent out in 9:1-6.
- 70 (NAS/KJV/NKJV) or 72 (NIV/ESV)? Reference the footnote.
 - We affirm that the original manuscripts are without error but all we have are copies with scribal differences. Which one is most accurate?
 - **OT symbolism for 70 is great**
 - Moses appointed 70 elders (Ex. 24:1, 9). The seventy nations of the earth listed in Gen. 10-11. The Sanhedrin consisted of 70 members.
 - **OT symbolism for 72 is minimal**
 - 72 translators of the Septuagint (LXX) - Greek translation of the OT. The LXX lists 72 nations in Gen. 10-11, as opposed to 70 in the Hebrew Bible.
 - The number 70 is of greater significance than 72 so a copyist looking for significance in the number would be more likely to change 72 to 70 than vice versa. Therefore, the more difficult reading would be 72.
 - This doesn't affect any significant doctrine. In fact, differences in the manuscripts affect no major doctrine at all. What is significant is not the symbolism of 70 or 72 but the fact that the mission is expanded beyond the twelve to 70/72.

- “Sent them out two by two”
 - We don’t do mission alone. Paul always had a companion and co-worker in ministry.
 - Two witnesses were needed to bring the condemnation of 10:11-5 (Deut. 19:15).
- “Laborers are few”: the first mission was just the 12, now it’s 72, and the prayer for more laborers reveals that even more witnesses/laborers are needed for the mission. Ministry moves beyond even this larger group of disciples.
 - The point: ministry is not confined to a select few. To be a disciple of Christ is to engage in mission and to equip others to do so.
 - You may feel that “following” Jesus is well within your capability but that “proclaiming” is only for a specialized few. WRONG! Exceptional people are not required for the mission of God. Our power is found in the message that we proclaim and our authority is from Christ.

1. Do you see the need around you?

- The harvest is plentiful. There will be rejection but there will also be many positive responses.
- Greater Boston & New England (Anthony Paula – saved the 1st time he heard the gospel at 18).
 - 4.9 million people in Boston (2.5% evangelical = 4.78 million are lost)
- Canada (3% evangelical)
 - Toronto: 1 SBC church for every 167,000 people (1 for every 43,000 in MA)
- The World (Joshua project info)
 - 16,565 People Groups in the World; 7,107 are Unreached!!!
 - These UPG contain 42% of the world’s population (2.9 billion people of 7 billion)
 - 2,329 of these UPG are in India alone (1.1 billion people)

2. Will you pray for laborers?

- Fruit is dependent upon the sovereign God: will you pray for laborers?
 - Sidebar: the role of prayer and fasting and missions (reference Acts 13:1-3).

3. Will you labor yourself?

- Fruit will only come as people labor in the fields (Expect great things, attempt great things).
- You don’t gain converts by force (lamb)
 - We can’t use force to compel genuine religious commitment
- You trust the Lord to provide for your needs (moneybag, knapsack, sandals, housing, food)
- You stay focused on the mission (greetings were lengthy and time-consuming)
- You bring peace (i.e. Messianic salvation and its blessings; faith is necessary).
- You may or may not receive compensation.

“Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,’ and, ‘The laborer deserves his wages.’ (1 Timothy 5:17-18 ESV)

“Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings. In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel. But I have made no use of any of these rights, nor am I writing these things to secure any such provision. For I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of my ground for boasting.” (1 Corinthians 9:13-15 ESV)

- You proclaim the coming of the kingdom.
 - The kingdom of God is the rule and reign of God in people’s hearts and lives.
 - It is manifested in a) people following Jesus and his teaching and b) in the miraculous healings that God brought. These healings gave a foretaste of the resurrected life in the age to come (God will make all things right).

- **Have you responded to the invitation of the kingdom** to be made right with God through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, by placing your faith and trust in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ?
- You will face reception and rejection.
 - This message requires a personal decision and it affects one's future before God
 - Dust off your feet(cf. Paul in Acts 13:49-52 dusting his feet off).
 - Sodom: the most despicable ancient Gentile city (Gen. 19).
 - Increased understanding of God's revelation means increased responsibility.

How can you labor well in Greater Boston?

- Eat with non-Christians (neighbors, at work - don't be a loner; at school, have a game night; host a sports game watching party - Super Bowl)
- Walk, don't drive (Leigh walks Ava to school, walk your dog, take interest in your neighbors)
- Get out, don't stay in the house (let the kids play in the yard, go to the park)
- Be a regular (gas, groceries, haircuts, eating out, coffee, get to know the staff, smile, ask questions, tip generously)
- Hobby with non-Christians (sports, running/walking, get your kids in local sports, help coach, be prayerful, winsome, intentional, and have fun)
- Talk to your co-workers (arrive early, take breaks, hear their stories, get your families together, surprise them with goodies, throw a baby shower)
- Participate in city events (fundraisers, festivals, parades, clean-ups, shows, concerts; start conversations; study the culture; pray for your city; love your city)
- Serve your neighbors (leaves, mowing, bless with food)

How can you labor well among the Nations?

- Spend a week a year on a mission trip (North America or the Nations)
- Give Generously
- Pray earnestly
- Support Missionaries

II. Disciples Labor on Mission with Faithful Proclamation (10:13-16).

- **Chorazin (korazin), Bethsaida, and Capernaum:** These were the cities where most of Jesus' miracles were performed. Chorazin (location is uncertain); Bethsaida see 9:10-17 (feeding of the 5,000); Capernaum see 4:23, 31-37 (heals a man with a demon); 7:1-10 (healed the Centurion's servant). Most of them rejected Jesus' mission and remained unrepentant
- **Tyre and Sidon**
 - These are two unrighteous OT cities (Isa. 23; Jer. 25:22; 47:4; Ezek. 26:1 – 28:24; Joel 3:4-8; Amos 1:9-10).
 - Repentance in sackcloth and ashes. This is an expression of mourning and repentance, of self-humiliation and grief.

Implications:

- The harvest is plentiful but there will be rejection.
 - Sin's ability to blind people in the face of God's working is great.
- Increased understanding means increased responsibility.
 - The current generation is less responsive than these notoriously wicked generations of past ages.
 - The point is not that these pagan cities would be excused but that the cities of Galilee would experience even greater condemnation.

- The kingdom will come regardless of one's response.
 - To reject the kingdom of God is the most serious of sins.
 - Heaven is not Capernaum's destination, Hades is. Hades is the place of the unrighteous dead (cf. Luke 16:22-26; Rev. 20:13-14).

“And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:13-15).

- We should shed tears over those who are perishing.
- Apologetic sidebar: How can a loving God send people to hell?
 - This is one of Christianity's most offensive doctrines.
 - God is love AND God is just. Can a loving God also be a just God? Shouldn't God just forgive and accept everyone?
 - Tim Keller says that “all loving persons are sometimes filled with wrath, not just despite of but because of their love. If you love a person and you see someone ruining them—even they themselves—you get angry” (*Reason for God*, 73).
 - “God is angry at evil and injustice because it is destroying its peace and integrity” (Keller, *Reason for God*, 73).
 - The justice of God promotes peace:
 - If there is no God who will eventually put all things right, then this will “secretly nourish violence” (Miroslav Volf). Keller says that “Only if I am sure that there's a God who will right all wrongs and settle all accounts do I have the power to refrain” (*Reason for God*, 75).
 - “In short, hell is simply one's freely chosen identity apart from God on a trajectory into infinity” (Keller, *Reason for God*, 78).
 - How can a holy God allow sinful people into heaven?
- Disciples of Jesus speak on behalf of him (cf. 9:48). If you reject them, you reject Jesus. If you listen to them, you listen to Jesus.
- **Have you responded to the gospel** with repentance and faith? The gospel is the only news that can remove your fear of death and hell.
 - Illustration: a chef at PF Chang's - is the world going to end on Friday? I'm scared. The gospel reduces and removes your fears.

III. **Disciples Labor on Mission with Joyful Humility (10:17-24).**

- There should be delight and great joy when serving on mission.
 - The disciples should be excited returning from their mission. How about you?
 - Mission is a tremendous privilege. Whatever our success, God is behind every mission.
- Rejoice not in your authority but in your secure salvation.
 - Authority/Power
 - Satan fall: (cf. Isa. 14:12); vision or remark? Unsure. The disciples' ministry points to the theological reality that the kingdom will destroy the works of Satan.
 - Authority over the enemy: They have power to overcome hostile creation represented by serpents and scorpions (Acts 28:3-6: Paul survives a snake bite). Such evil forces and what they represent can be opposed and crushed. Nothing can hurt the disciples. They can overcome anything that opposes them because Christ's authority overcomes the enemies' power.

- While unrepentant cities are destined for hell, those who respond to the news of the kingdom inherit eternal life in heaven. “While Satan is cast down from heaven, disciples are a part of the heavenly census” (Bock, 1009).
 - Jesus doesn’t want his disciples to focus on the power they have but rather their gracious and secure position before God. There is a joy greater than their authority. This should be a continual rejoicing.
 - The book indicates that Jesus’ disciples are personally known by God and that their eternal presence before him is certain. This is a word of comfort and encouragement.
- Salvation is for the needy
 - Jesus rejoices in the way God has administered salvation. God has not chosen the wise and understanding but babies. This challenges a common understanding in Judaism that salvation comes to the wise. “God’s pleasure reaches down to those who seem to have nothing to offer but their need, yet he gives them everything in terms of spiritual blessing” (Bock).
 - What Jesus is NOT saying: He is not saying that we should be passive and unthinking. The point is that salvation springs not from gifts that we have but from the goodness and kindness of God.
 - There is an intimate relationship between Jesus and God.
 - One of Luke’s strongest Christological statements. The Son is subject to the Father’s direction. The Son is a mediator of blessing.
 - No one can know the Father or what God is about without listening to the Son and his revelation.
 - Turning to the disciples: they are eyewitnesses of great events. Many past greats, both prophets and kings, longed to experience the Jesus events.
 - There is great blessing in experiencing the effects of Jesus’ ministry, since kings and prophets longed for these days. Promises of old are now being fulfilled” (Bock, 993).