

24. Jesus Sends out the Seventy

Luke 10:1-24

Luke: A Walk Through the Life of Jesus

The Workers Are Few

In his narrative, Luke now writes about the last missionary journey that takes place several weeks preceding the crucifixion.

¹After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. ²He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. ³Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves (Luke 10:1-3).

The time is short, and Jesus longs to reach as many as He can. He did not cloister Himself away to prepare spiritually for the battle that He will experience, i.e., Gethsemane, during which His sweat became as drops of blood. In these last few weeks, He multiplies the workers to reach those without a shepherd. He had twelve leaders symbolic, perhaps, of the sons of Israel that became a great nation. Let's look at the similarities here. God chose one man, Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel, to give birth to twelve sons. God spoke to Jacob (Israel) before sending him, his sons, and grandsons to Egypt and said that He would multiply the seventy sent to Egypt to become a great nation:

³" I am God, the God of your father," he said. "Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there. ⁴I will go down to Egypt with you, and I will surely bring you back again ²⁷With the two sons who had been born to Joseph in Egypt, the members of Jacob's family, which went to Egypt, were seventy in all (Genesis 46: 3-4, 27).

God's promise to Abraham was that, from his body, the Lord would raise up an earthly progeny so numerous that they would be as the stars in the sky:

¹⁵The angel of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven a second time ¹⁶and said, "I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, ¹⁸and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me" (Genesis 22:15-18).

Of course, the number 70 can also symbolize the seventy elders that became part of the mission of Moses (Numbers 11:16-17). God took of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders, the result being that the burden of Moses was reduced. These seventy elders became known as the Sanhedrin. There is a difference between English translations as to the number of disciples that were sent out by Jesus. In the NIV translation, verse one says that seventy-two were sent out, but it puts a little note at the bottom of the page saying that some manuscripts say

that there were seventy. The King James Version translates the number to be seventy. The New American Standard version also presents it as seventy. The picture is of a people called to be multiplied to be a heavenly nation, i.e., the stars of heaven in Abraham's vision. It's interesting that Jesus also talked of the church, saying that, when He comes at the end of the age, **"the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father"** (Matthew 13:43), i.e., like distant stars in the night sky.

Jesus multiplied the twelve to be seventy, and soon, they would be increased to 120 praying in the upper room after the resurrection. When the Spirit came on the day of Pentecost, the number of disciples would again grow to 3,120 believers (Acts 2:41), and within a few days later, the men alone became 5,000 believers (Acts 4:4). The heart of our God is for people to know Him. Jesus' passion in His last days was to send out seventy others to preach and do ministry. How beautiful it would be for any pastor to be able to send out seventy dedicated individuals to reach the lost. The seventy or seventy-two, depending on your translation, were to go out in pairs of thirty-five teams into various towns on the way to Jerusalem.

This principle of going together with another is pure wisdom. It is also an unspoken rule for a fisherman to go with another. I am thankful that my father kept that rule when I worked as a commercial fisherman with him. I had my fingers caught in the net one particular time, and the net dragged me over the stern of his forty-five-foot trawler. With the propeller thrashing around by my feet, the Lord spared me by my father's taking the engine out of gear and pulling me back on board with the power gear usually used to pull up the net. If I had been alone, I wouldn't have been able to reach up more than five feet to get back onboard.

The Lord sent them out as sheep among ferocious wolves. There would be rejection and opposition to their message, and they would need one another for feedback, fellowship, and encouragement. This following of Jesus all disciples are on will bring many challenges and tests, so we need people around us who can watch our back and encourage us when we are low. Many people go through loneliness, especially pastors. They often can't share what they are going through with the people of their congregations for various reasons. There should be an accountability relationship for each of us. The enemy seeks an opportunity to destroy our reputation and bring suspicion of our motives and integrity. Even though Jesus was joyfully sending out the seventy-two, He told them to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out more laborers (v. 2).

The Greek word translated as *send* means to thrust forcefully. Like an eaglet forced out of the nest, so God has to open His people's eyes to the need of the multitudes without Christ. The harvest is plentiful; the problem is that the workers are few. As the church, we need to pray for God to push some out of the nest. We get comfortable in our lifestyles and forget that there are people out there whose destiny is an eternity without God (Ephesians 2:12). Each of us is to go or to get behind those called to go in whatever way we can, knowing that all who give of their time, energy, and money will be rewarded according to how they have invested in reaching the lost. □

No-one is exempt from the work; all of the Body of Christ is to be involved. God raises individuals as leaders and equippers, but it is the work of the sheep to make more sheep! So

often, the people of God get caught up in their daily lives and forget what it feels like to be a lost sheep. We forget to pray for the multiplication of the church. I am convinced that God is looking for whole congregations to pour out their lives in dedication for the salvation of those who have yet to find Christ.

Did you know that it was not until the year 1830 that the population of the earth grew to reach one billion people? From that point, it took 130 years, to the year 1960, to add the second billion to planet Earth. Today, we are well over a population of 7.4 billion here in 2016 and increasing by a billion approximately every eight to nine years. If God would visit in revival in the days of Charles Finney, Jonathan Edwards, John Wesley, and George Whitfield, why would He not visit us in power in our day? More than half the number of people who have ever lived are now alive. Think about that. We are desperately in need of a multiplication that is faster than the birth rate to reach the unreached before the harvest. If the harvest was great in the time when Jesus walked on earth, how much more so now? We need the power of God in what we do, and we need to be multiplying the workers. The stakes are enormous in the number of people that will go to an eternity without Christ in this generation if we do not have a mighty revival.

The church of today leans too much on training people in knowledge, skills, and organization. The seventy-two did not have a lot of training. They were to learn by on-the-job training to lean and depend on the Lord Jesus. John Wesley, the great father of the Methodist Church, once said: "Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God, and I care not whether they be clergymen or laymen, they alone will shake the gates of Hell and set up the kingdom of Heaven upon Earth."

Question 1) When Jesus talked about the harvest (v. 2), what did He mean, and why are the laborers few?□

The harvest refers to the end of the age when Jesus will come (Joel 3:12-14; Mark 4:29). "Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, 'First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn'" (Matthew 13:30). He will send forth His angels, and the earth will be harvested (Revelation 14:15). There will be a separation of all those who do evil from those who are the people of God. All those who have responded to Christ will be part of the heavenly people group called the church. The laborers are few because many feel they are not equipped or trained enough, but that is what we see in these seventy that were sent out. They were ill-equipped in all sorts of ways and had to rely on the Lord to provide for them.

In Your Going Do This

⁴Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road. ⁵ "When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' ⁶If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you. ⁷Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house. ⁸"When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. ⁹Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you' (Luke 10:4-9).

Similar to when the twelve were sent out, the disciples were told to carry with them no moneybag, no knapsack, and no extra sandals to change into when they came into a household with their muddy sandals on their feet. They were to rely totally on the Lord's ability to provide for everything they needed. When they entered a house, they were to speak a blessing of peace to the house. Sometimes, one can be aware that there is something not quite right in a residence, i.e., something amiss, although we might not be able to put our finger on it. When we go into a home, we bring the presence of Christ with us. □

There are places, unfortunately, where Christ is not welcome. When we are welcomed into homes, we are not to look for better accommodation elsewhere. The servant of God is not to be focused on comfort or even what food he likes. He is to eat what is set before him. In the Middle East, it is very humiliating for a host when one does not like what is put before him. Hospitality is of the utmost importance. When we are not welcomed, we are not to dwell on it. The heart of the servant of God is to be on the occupants of the household and not on what he should receive from them.

Jesus told them not to greet anyone on the way (v. 4). These words seem a peculiar statement today, and we think that Jesus is telling us not to say hello, but this is not what the Lord is saying. The news was communicated by people as they met one another on roads or as they traveled from one place to another. Meeting another on the road was an elaborate and time-consuming thing. He did not want them to focus on trivial matters that would turn the servant away from the task of reaching the city or town where they were sent. □

They were on a lifesaving mission, and so are we! The enemy would love to sidetrack us from the purpose we are called to complete, i.e., the primary task of finding a household to hear the Good News. They were to find a worthy person in whatever city or town to which they went, a person who was open to listening to the Word of God. If invited into the home, they were to recline at the table as Jesus had modeled with the disciples, and they were to share the Good News. The seventy were also told to heal the sick (v. 9).

Some would say that only the twelve were given authority and commissioned to heal the sick, but here we see the seventy commanded to trust God to heal the sick. If the seventy were commissioned to heal the sick, why would it be any different for the blood-bought child of God that has entered into the New Covenant through the blood of Jesus? Before ascending to heaven, Jesus told the twelve to “**make disciples of all nations...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you**” (Matthew 28:19). What did He teach and command them? He commissioned the twelve and the seventy to heal the sick. We don't do the healing; only God can do that, but we are expected to trust the Lord by praying for the sick: “**These signs will accompany those who believe...they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will be made well**” (Mark 16:17-18).

When the whole church takes the whole Gospel to the whole world, then, I believe, we will see a mighty move of God in response to simple faith in what Jesus has commanded His disciples to practice. The world is waiting and dying to see a powerful church that will walk in faith upon the promises of God.

Question 2) If God were to call you full-time or to a short-term missions trip and give you the same instructions as you see here, what would be your most significant anxiety? □

This was an official calling and empowering of the seventy and each believer since Pentecost and the giving of the Spirit, “I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions, and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you” (v. 19). Jesus went on to say to them, “He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects Him who sent me” (v.16).

At the beginning of chapter nine, the seventy were not given an office or title like the twelve, but they were being sent to do the same ministry as the twelve. The authority of God is not in the title people are given. The authority given is because of our relationship to the God of the Universe. If you are a follower of Christ, you are given that same authority. When we take any opportunity to share Christ, He assures us that He is there. God's power is on each of us as we go sharing the Gospel.

Jesus also wants His disciples to have a heavenly perspective when they suffered rejection. He knew that not everyone would accept their message. He says that, when people reject you (speaking of the disciples), they are rejecting Christ. The Lord went on to say that, when others reject Him, they are also rejecting His Father, God. He wants them to remember this and not to react in a naturally defensive way. They are not to let rejection affect them by taking it personally. This is a sobering thought, and it makes us realize how precious the message is that we carry. When we bring the words of Jesus, we are carrying out the Father's will, for all that belong to Christ are ambassadors of His kingdom with His authority behind us (2 Corinthians 5:20). □

Those who Reject Mercy and Grace Must Face Judgment

¹⁰But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, ¹¹ "Even the dust of your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God is near." ¹²I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town. ¹³Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. ¹⁴But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. ¹⁵And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. ¹⁶He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me (Luke 10:10-16).

Question 3) What do you think was the sin of Sodom for which at the Last Judgment they are to be punished? Why would there be harsher punishment for those villages that heard the Good News and rejected it?

Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy (Ezekiel 16:49).

There are different levels of suffering for those who reject Christ, depending on how much light they are given. Sodom will receive less punishment than the town of Korazin and Bethsaida, towns in Galilee (v. 12) because these towns saw many miracles and heard the Gospel preached but did not respond and receive mercy. Sodom would receive less punishment because they received less understanding and light. We are accountable to the truth we have received. The more knowledge, insight, and awareness of God that a person gets, then the more he or she is responsible before God to act on what they hear.

⁴⁶The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers. ⁴⁷"That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. ⁴⁸But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked (Luke 12:46-48).

In the passage above, Jesus is speaking about accountability. He clearly states that people are held accountable specifically for the amount of truth that they receive. Those who do not know the truth and act in ignorance will not suffer judgment to the same measure as those who knew and chose to reject and disobey the truth presented to them. This is also part of a larger picture, which shows us that, even though evil is tolerated and preferred often in this present world, God sees everything. He knows what light and truth each person has received. Knowing this should cause us to be heavenly minded in all we say and do. □

Names Written in Heaven

¹⁷The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." ¹⁸He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. ¹⁹I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. ²⁰However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." ²¹At that time Jesus, full 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. ²²"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." ²³Then he turned to his disciples and said privately, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. ²⁴For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it" (Luke 10:17-24).

Question 4) What happened, do you think, as a result of the demons being subject to them? How would they have been able to observe this? What do you think Jesus meant when He said, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven?" (v. 18).□

It is possible that Christ's words were describing what He saw in the spiritual realm when praying for the seventy disciples as they were going about their ministry. I interpret this to mean

that the seventy had seriously undermined Satan's strongholds that he had been building for some time in the cities and towns where they went. It could be that, in some way, Satan's rule was diminished causing his "fall," or perhaps it means that his position was so severely damaged that he had to come down very quickly to sort out all the problems that the disciples had made. His residence, as far as can be seen, is not yet in Sheol or hell, but Paul in his letter to the Ephesians calls Satan **"the ruler of the kingdom of the air"** (Ephesians 2:2). Hence Jesus sees him falling in a panic to prop up his kingdom. Charles Swindoll, in his commentary on Luke, adds, □

The Lord's depiction of Satan falling from his place of power is, without question, symbolic of the effect Jesus and His disciples were having on the world. His imagery comes from Isaiah 14:12, which many interpret as a reference to Satan's fall from the heavenly realm in punishment for his rebellion, an event that occurred before Genesis 1:1. At the end of days, Satan will fall from his place of dominion over the world and suffer eternal torment (Rev. 8:10; 9:1), a consequence of his final defeat. Jesus saw the ministry of the seventy as the beginning of that final fall.¹

Jesus was using the imagery of Isaiah to affirm the disciples' joy that the demons were subject to His name. He was showing them just how vital this mission was. Christ came not only to be a Jewish ruler or even to come as a ruler of the world but, instead, to transform everything. He came to conquer evil once and for all. Jesus wanted them to see the spiritual significance of the work He was calling them to do, i.e., the bigger picture. They were beginning to see the actual scope of this great commission.

Luke 10, verse one, says that Christ had sent them out two by two to every place where He was about to go. How, then, is it that we read that the seventy returned with joy? It sounds like they were reporting back as to what went on through their time of ministry. Why would they be excited to tell Him that the demons had been subject to them if He had been with them? It is possible that Jesus stayed in one place and spent time in intercessory prayer and that a unique sense of His presence went with them as they traveled.

The disciples were full of joy at the way the people responded to the healings and deliverances that went on during the ministry of the seventy. Jesus told them, however, that their joy should be centered on the fact that their names were written in the Lamb's Book of Life (Revelation 21:10). In verse twenty-one, Jesus is filled with joy as He sees His friends and co-laborers realizing their inheritance in Him. We are to be children in the sense of our innocence and ability to trust him as a young child trusts a father. We have been chosen by the Son to have the Father revealed to us (v. 22). □

It is possible the seventy disciples were getting used to minister in the power of the Spirit in the same way that they would function when Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father. At the end of Mark's Gospel, the **"Disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it"** (Mark 16:20). God's passion for you and me is to trust that He is with us when we reach out to heal and deliver those around us: **"Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age"** (Matthew 28:20).

¹ Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Luke*, Published by Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI. Page 269

Question 5) There are those who believe the gifts of the Spirit died out when the New Testament was written and that only the twelve Apostles were given authority to do the works of the kingdom. What do you say to that? Do you think all seventy had the gift of healing? What's the relationship of healing to evangelism? □

Again and again, we read about Jesus healing the sick as He went to teach the people. The works of the kingdom always confirmed the Word. The Word of God and the works of God went hand in hand. Jesus said, “**These signs shall follow those that believe...**” (Mark 16:17). It is essential for us to realize that, when we share the good news, when we pray for those who are sick or, in some way, oppressed by the enemy, the results are in God’s hands. It is His commission we are fulfilling. Our part is obedience, trust, and, yes, faith in Christ, which will grow as we step out and obey.

Ask yourself; “What is the worst case scenario if I pray for someone?” If they are not instantly healed, do you think that God is big enough to take care of them in that situation? Do they still feel that you loved them enough to reach out and petition the Lord on their behalf? Did you leave them feeling the love of the Father? Take the risk and leave the results with God. □

Prayer: Father, I pray for all of us that have read this study and that You would fill us with joy as we seek to touch other lives with the Good News. Lord of the Harvest, our prayer is that more workers and resources would be released to finish the task of getting the Gospel to all nations. Amen!

Keith Thomas

Website: www.groupbiblestudy.com

Email: keiththomas@groupbiblestudy.com