

## Good News from Doctor Luke 10 The Harvest is Plentiful!

Luke 10:1-24

Luke forever drawing the contrasts in his presentation of the gospel has just told us about the three would-be followers (9:57-62) so at the beginning of Chapter 10 it's a delight to read about a large group of sincere and enthusiastic disciples of Jesus, who offered no excuses when called to serve. Without reservation they answered the call, and to a considerable extent they were successful in their mission.

Ploughers who look back plough crooked furrows, which wastes precious time and are no good for the field. The Lord is calling you and me in 2014 to fix our eyes firmly on Him and Him alone, *and to Go!*

The 72 or 70 paralleled the numerical strength of the Sanhedrin (a religious talk shop / hot air / anything goes place / traditional triumphing over scripture (which they throw out, keeping only the Pentateuch) and the comparison Jesus was drawing was clear to Luke: Churchmen or Christians, Dogmatists or Disciples, Traditionalists or the treaders of the new territory God wants to bought into His Kingdom? The challenge is now to us and each will have to respond, as did the 72. Within this account of missionary enterprise are 4 clear parts each of which are a challenge to us as we sound God's trumpet for Canterbury and be part of the new thing He is doing.

### 1. The Appointment of the 72 and charge given to them (v1-12)

Sent and spent: that's the kingdom of God. The measure of the Kingdom says obedience = blessing, and disobedience or inertia produces the opposite. Jesus appoints them two by two to go ahead of Him but behind the Holy Spirit (echoing the ark of deliverance). Why so many sent? The answer is clear: there is much work still to be accomplished, the time during which it must be completed is short and its importance is beyond their

comprehension! I think that Jesus also wanted to emphasize that the work of the Kingdom is not limited to a few (Jesus or the twelve). Now there are 72 and he still tells them to pray for more workers. "There is a task for everyone and there is a task for me." Why? Because the "Harvest is plentiful", true then and how much more so now. The workers are few: labourers are required not loafers. So we are told to pray over Canterbury: Lord send the workers! He did then and He will now. You see, though all depends on God, He chooses to accomplish His work by human means: God has no hands but our hands. And it's also His harvest: they do not belong to us, and God may do with them as He pleases. These disciples are told to depend entirely on Him! On Your Marks (they are called to prayer), Get Set (they are called to get the right kit: Holy Spirit, no baggage, knowing they are chosen and part of the Body), Go (the task is urgent, don't hesitate). I am sending you out (No less than their shepherd speaking: Isaiah 40:11), like Lambs among Wolves (utter helplessness, extreme danger yet because Shepherd leading they know his commissioning and presence). Then they must travel light (9:3) placing their trust entirely in God and believing that He will supply all their needs. No greetings on the road are to be exchanged cause the business of the King is urgent (Single minded).

They are to reach out to the sons and daughters of peace. They are to pronounce a blessing of peace on each house as they enter. This is not just a wish however sincere: in the name of their sender Jesus, these disciples not only spoke peace over the household but actually bought it with them. This special blessing was for all who by grace were worthy to receive it, but not for all. If the home is undeserving then "Your peace will return to you" (remember how when Jesus heals he gives of himself) says Jesus; that is, in that case no blessing will be bestowed. Having entered the home, do not wait says Jesus for those who live there to

start the conversation. It is you that should start it and your approach be positive not negative or defensive.

Stay in that house, eat and drink, for the worker deserves his wages. Make that your missionary HQ and network out from there says Jesus until you're eventually called to move to another town. ***Let me pause here to plead the cause of those in full time ministry: the worker deserves his wages: congregations and denominations should take this to heart. Those who devote themselves entirely and wholeheartedly to the work of the gospel should not be regarded as objects of charity. The congregation or stream owes them a living wage (1 Timothy 5:18).*** Eat what is set before you: Jews in a gentile area: Acts 10 is relevant here says Luke. Jesus is saying: don't question the food for it's of secondary importance. They were to leave behind any scruples they may have about the ritual cleanliness of the food, which could certainly hamper their progress. Then "heal the sick who are there" thus doing the things that Jesus did (John 14:12), an active demonstration of the Kingdom of God and powerful witness. Tell them "these bones can live"; the Kingdom of God is near you! Kingdom of course is bigger than Church and fortunately no one can hijack it! God's kingship, rule or sovereignty, recognised in the hearts and operative in the Lives of His people and effecting their complete salvation.

If not welcomed: symbolically go into its streets, wipe the dust off your feet and say The Kingdom of God is near (showing divine displeasure and what they have rejected). Then go on your way. On that day it will be more bearable for Sodom than for them: scary stuff! Just as there are degrees of glory there are also degrees of punishment. Sodom had sinned grievously but the cities Jesus selected to receive the very special privilege of having his personal messengers sent to them with a pleading and urgent appeal will have sinned far more. In rejecting Christ's messengers they have rejected Him. Shutting themselves out of

the kingdom cannot be stopped but it brings judgement upon them.

***Don't miss this next bit!***

## 2. Punishment awaiting those who reject their Masters Message

(v13-16) This strategy of going for the sons and daughters of peace is a biblical as it comes and we would do well to heed its lead: these verses tell us that there is a limit to doormat evangelism. The lakeside towns of Galilee were uniquely blessed: they lived in the light of the truth made flesh in Jesus and to have rejected or neglected Him was a dire choice. Capernaum lies in ruins among its trees, Korazin (one of the ten towns of the Decapolis on the far side Syrian shore) is gone entirely. "When the faith and principles round which a nation builds its strength and usefulness decay, inevitably disaster follows. The Word of God came to Britain through many different ambassadors of Christ (Augustine, Patrick, Columbus): we have been uniquely privileged, enlightened beyond others, blessed with centuries of faithful witness, but with such blessing comes responsibility and we should not assume there is not a consequence to our fall from His grace. V16 carries a salutary warning: He who listens to you listens to me (am I speaking up?); he who rejects you rejects me (am I giving them anything to reject?), for he who rejects me rejects the one who sent me. What if I have not even heard His sending charge and call?

3. Report of Missionaries upon their return filled with joyful enthusiasm (v17-20). Here we have a picture of what flows from our obedience: joy and fruitfulness! The 72 all returned with Joy. They had discovered that there is power in the name of Jesus: even the demons submitted (sometimes it feels as if the demonic realm recognise more the power of Jesus than we do!) Jesus' remark about Satan is to check their pride: Moffatt (Yes I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning.") Lets remind ourselves that Satan was the prosecuting counsel in

heaven's divine law court: his plea was justice over mercy. His ejection from heaven (Revelation 12:7-12) means that God's redemptive mercy has delivered us both from the sentence hanging over us and the guilt and power that held us captive. Note that Satan fell by pride: success in their preaching and evangelism could easily lead to arrogance so they needed to learn that God had done all of this and that the most secret of prayers were important in this process. The examples of Serpents and Scorpions are to remind the disciples of cunning vicious enemies against them but Jesus reassures them that His authority is given to them to overcome all the power of the enemy. The promise: ***nothing will harm you*** is a precious one for all apostolic missionary disciples. This was indeed for Jesus a kind of prophetic vision: these exorcisms were not the decisive victory but tokens of a victory yet to be won through the cross. So to the disciples he says: think not of the power but of the privilege for more important than anything is that your names are written in the book of life! Alleluia!!

We finish with:

4. Jesus' celebration of his life shared with Holy Spirit and the Father, now made available to every disciple. (v21-24).

Jesus full of joy through the Holy Spirit! The Greek word used here is the same as in the Greek translation of the Hebrew text about King David celebrating in worship his victories (2 Samuel 6:14). Jesus echoes his last week's message reminding his disciples to remain in that place of childlike faith and not to become hostage to adult so called sophistication! He then ***revels*** in his unique relationship and unity with his Father, and finally turns to his disciples and says tells them how blessed they are that they have been privileged to see such Kingdom action which prophets and kings had longed for over centuries.

So Luke lays before you and me the challenge of active discipleship, missionary endeavour, and doing the things Jesus did: will we say yes Lord in a childlike way or will we come up with 1001 reasons why not?

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