

## TO PROCLAIM THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Luke 10:1-24

Key Verse: 10:9

“Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God is near you.’”

In the last passage Jesus taught that a truly great man is humble, like Jesus. Though Jesus is the Creator God who made the heavens and the earth, he renounced his glory and power and came down to this world. He served all kinds of sinners and finally gave his life as a ransom sacrifice on the cross. Then God raised him from the dead and made him the King of kings and Lord of lords. May God help us to learn the humbleness of Jesus to be truly great in the sight of God.

In today’s passage Jesus sends out seventy-two other disciples to the half-Gentile territory of Perea. Their mission was to proclaim the kingdom of God. We learn what is most important for each person. It is to receive the kingdom of God and to proclaim the kingdom of God. May God help us to do so in this new fall semester.

First, “Lord, send out workers” (1-3).

Look at verse 1. “After 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.” The words “after this” refer to the events in the previous passage. Jesus had made a firm decision of faith to obey the will of God and go to Jerusalem to die on the cross for the sin of the world. But his disciples were still immature, selfish and narrow-minded, arguing about who would be the greatest. Jesus must have been very lonely in the midst of his young disciples. What did Jesus do? Jesus appointed seventy-two others and sent them out two by two. It seems likely that the Twelve were not among the seventy-two. The Twelve needed to watch what Jesus was doing, like benchboys for the time being, instead of arguing about their own greatness. It is really amazing that Jesus sent out seventy-two others. Seventy-two is six times twelve. This shows that Jesus’ ministry was expanding from the nation of Israel to the whole world. Jesus was not discouraged by the poor spiritual condition of his disciples. Jesus was not daunted by the thought of his upcoming suffering and death on the cross. Jesus was burning with God’s love to spread the message of the kingdom of God to the whole world. Jesus wanted to save all people on earth from the power of sin and death. This reminds us of John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

Luke emphasizes that Jesus sent them “two by two.” This was God’s wisdom. Ecclesiastes 4:9,10 say, “Two are better than one...If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!” One person is very vulnerable in doing God’s work. But two persons can form a spiritual vessel, with which they can withstand the power of Satan. When two people pray together in Jesus’ name, they can experience Jesus’ presence and help. Matthew 18:19 says, “Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.”

Look at verse 2. “He 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.’” To Jesus, the harvest was plentiful. To Jesus, there were so many thirsty souls who panted for the living water of God’s word. There were so many lonely people who pined for their true Friend and Shepherd Jesus. There were so many weary people who were tired of living in sin and longed for the holiness of God. But the workers were few. The Pharisees and teachers of the law were called to be shepherds for their nation. But they were not interested in suffering people. Jesus was heart-broken. Jesus wanted to visit all of them one by one. But it seemed impossible. In that despairing situation, Jesus asked his disciples to pray for God’s help. Sometimes we are simply overwhelmed by the spiritual need of our campus, our nation, our world. We don’t know where to start. But we learn from Jesus to start with prayer. We must pray that the Lord may send out workers to UIC, Northwestern, Northeastern, U of C, Loyola, Harper, COD and all Chicago area campuses. We must pray that the Lord may send out workers to make America a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. We must pray that the Lord may send out missionaries to all nations of the world.

Look at verse 3. “Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.” After prayer, Jesus sent out seventy-two disciples into the harvest field. They were not well-trained and mature; they were like little lambs. The situation they were confronting was perilous, like going into a den of wolves. Nevertheless, Jesus sent them out in his divine

compassion. It was a foretaste of Jesus' own entry into Jerusalem. God sent Jesus, his one and only Son, as the Lamb of God for the sin of the world. Our young people are cute and pure, like little lambs. Surely, Jesus wants to use them to harvest souls in this fall semester.

Second, tell them, "The kingdom of God is near you" (4-16).

In verses 4-12, Jesus gave several instructions. The disciples could have a fruitful harvest when they followed these instructions carefully. Look at verse 4. "Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road." Simply speaking, this means to depend on God and not to be distracted. Sinful human beings want to depend on their own clever calculations instead of depending on God. There is one person who thinks he needs a master's degree in divinity or a Ph.D. in church history to deal with the questions that might come up if he goes fishing. But when Jesus sends us, we must just go, depending on God alone.

Look at verses 5-6. "When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you." The disciples were to impart the peace that Jesus gives. This is the peace with God that comes from forgiveness of sins. Those who have Jesus in their hearts can have peace with God and peace with others. The disciples needed spiritual discernment. Not everyone would accept their greeting of peace. They must be very sensitive toward those who accepted their spiritual blessing.

Look at verse 7. "Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house." Gospel workers must not move around to find better sheep or a better environment. They must stay in the place where they are accepted and learn to overcome the situation.

Look at verse 9. "Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you.'" Healing the sick reveals the character of the kingdom of God. God is love. God is concerned about each person and wants to extend his personal touch to the sickness or problem that damages our lives. The disciples' main purpose is to proclaim the message, "The kingdom of God is near you." Here, "the kingdom of God" refers to Jesus himself. Mark 1:15 says, "'The time has come,' he said. 'The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!'" Whoever repents and believes Jesus can have the kingdom of God in their hearts. Jesus drives out demons and heals sinsicknesses and rules our hearts with peace and love.

Some people think the kingdom of God is only for old people who are ready to leave this world. But the kingdom of God is the best blessing to anybody, no matter who he may be. There was a man named Levi the tax collector. He studied well in school, became a successful businessman and achieved his yuppie dream. But he was never happy. He was selfish and he loved money. When his wife accidentally damaged his new car, he could not love her anymore. When his children asked him to buy fashionable clothes, he was so upset that they were frightened and ran away from him. Even his dog did not like to be around him. He was lonely, sorrowful and miserable. One day Jesus called him, "Follow me." Levi got up, left everything, and followed Jesus. The kingdom of God came to his heart. His selfishness was healed and he no longer loved money. He could taste the love of Jesus. He began to love and serve others. He found his life direction. Finally, he became a model citizen of the kingdom of God who could write the Sermon on the Mount.

The kingdom of God gives us true joy and peace and the love of God while on earth. But that's not all. The kingdom of God is our eternal home. It gives us a clear destination and direction of life. It gives us a living hope in this perishing world. Dr. Billy Graham said, "Man cannot live without hope." But hope in this world does not last because it is rooted in things that perish. There was a boy who participated in a fund-raising program for his grade school by selling chocolate to friends and neighbors. He wanted to win a good prize. So he worked hard and won a helicopter that could really fly. With great expectation he took it outside and launched it. It went really high. Then a wind caught it and carried it farther and farther away until it was out of sight. The little boy stood there for a moment; his elation turned into disappointment. His father wanted to comfort him, so he said, "Son, things in the world are all like that helicopter. They just fly away someday." Instead of encouraging his son, the father also became disappointed, thinking his son would fly away someday like that helicopter. Men must have hope. But the things of the world cannot give us living hope. Only the kingdom of God gives us a living hope. 1 Peter 1:3,4 says, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or

fade—kept in heaven for you.” When we accept Jesus in our hearts, we have the promise of heaven as our everlasting inheritance.

Look at verses 10-12. “But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, ‘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.’ I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.” Some people reject the message of the kingdom of God because they don’t want to repent. The disciples must not compromise with them, but wipe the dust off their feet and tell them again that the kingdom of God is near. To those who reject Jesus, the coming of the kingdom of God is not good news.

Look at verses 13-15. Korazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum were the cities in which Jesus spent most of his time during his Galilean ministry. There he had healed the sick and driven out evil spirits and proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God. But the people there did not repent their sins. Now Jesus grieves for them. Without repentance and faith in Jesus, no one can enter the kingdom of God. Instead, they would be put into eternal punishment in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. Some people think Jesus is “love” and that he does not punish sin. But Jesus speaks very clearly here about the eternal punishment that awaits those who do not repent and believe. Look at verse 16. Finally Jesus said, “He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me.” Those who reject gospel workers are rejecting Jesus and even God himself. Gospel workers do not need to take rejection personally. Gospel workers must simply deliver the message, “The kingdom of God is near.”

Third, Jesus teaches his disciples how to rejoice in God (17-24).

Look at verse 17. “The seventy-two returned with joy and said, ‘Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.’” The seventy-two disciples experienced the great power of Jesus. When they rebuked evil spirits in the name of Jesus, the demons ran away. The disciples became a source of blessing for others and true servants of Jesus. They were so happy they must have been dancing an Irish jig. Jesus was also happy. Jesus enjoyed the spiritual victory over Satan that had been promised by God from the beginning (18,19). Though the seventy-two had been like lambs among wolves, they had absolute protection and everlasting victory in Jesus’ name.

Look at verse 20. “However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” In doing God’s work there are ups and downs. Sometimes we can see demons flee away and have joyful victory. But sometimes the work of God does not seem to make much progress. If our joy depends on our success in doing God’s work, we will go up and down like a yo-yo. Jesus teaches us to find the source of joy in our relationship with him, not in the success of the ministry. Jesus gives us the grace of forgiveness of sins and writes our names in the book of life in heaven. Jesus saves us by his grace, not because we are successful in doing his work. We can always rejoice that our names are written in heaven.

Look at verse 21. “At 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.’” Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit. Jesus was facing the imminent event of his betrayal, suffering and crucifixion. But Jesus had great joy in his heart through the Holy Spirit. Jesus praised God for working mightily in his disciples. They were not well educated or great in the world. But when they obeyed Jesus by faith, they could experience the power of God.

Look at verse 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.” More than anything else, Jesus enjoyed his personal relationship with his Father God. He was glad that the Father entrusted his whole plan for world salvation to Jesus. Jesus was glad that the Father understood him and he understood the Father. This was Jesus’ power source that enabled him to go to Jerusalem.

Look at verses 23-24. “Then he turned to his disciples and said privately, ‘Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For 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.’” Here, Jesus seems to be addressing the Twelve. They had not gone on the evangelistic journey. They were on probation. But they were most blessed to see the work of God going on through Jesus. They

were more blessed than many prophets and kings. Jesus wanted them to see themselves in view of God's history and realize how blessed they were. Jesus wants his disciples to learn how to rejoice in God and be really happy.

In this passage we learned Jesus' compassionate shepherd's heart for all people. Jesus sent out seventy-two other disciples to proclaim the kingdom of God. Then Satan's kingdom was totally defeated and the kingdom of God expanded. Jesus and his disciples were overjoyed. Let's pray that the Lord may send out workers to Chicago, America and the world proclaiming, "The kingdom of God is near."