

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.'"

Once, Jesus sent out the twelve apostles for fieldwork training. This time Jesus sends out seventy-two other disciples. Luke the historian is the one who avoids "doublets." But he recorded in his Gospel these two similar accounts of sending out disciples for fieldwork training. At this time, fieldwork training looked compulsory, for Jesus was soon going up to Jerusalem to die for the sin of the world. Nevertheless, Jesus gives fieldwork training to another seventy-two disciples. In this, we learn the compassion of Jesus. No matter what the situation might be, he was willing to fulfill God's will for world salvation. First, "Go, I am sending you" (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." Before going to Jerusalem to die on the cross, Jesus wanted to visit all the villages in the Galilean district and its vicinity. But the time was too short for Jesus to do so. So Jesus sent seventy-two other disciples out to take care of those who had not yet heard the good news of the kingdom of God. In this, we see God's compassion in Jesus and this incident moves us to tears.

Why did Jesus send them two by two? Because man needs coworkers. The Chinese character portrays man as two sticks supporting each other. Ecclesiastes 4:9,10 says, "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!" 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." Two persons getting together in doing God's work is God's wisdom. For two persons can form a spiritual vessel, with which they can withstand the power of Satan, and God can use this spiritual vessel fruitfully. Two persons getting together is God's wisdom.

The number twelve refers to the number of the tribes of Israel; the number seventy-two, to the number of members of the Jewish Council, which has a connotation of a nation, or the whole world. The Twelve were mainly sent to the Jews. Jesus sent the seventy-two to the inhabitants of the Trans-Jordan, the half-Gentiles. At that time, the Jewish religious leaders intentionally ignored the inhabitants of Trans-Jordan. But Jesus cared for them in his time of mental agony. To the eyes of Luke, a Gentile, Jesus' compassion was marvelous. Surely Jesus came to this world to save men from their sins and bring them back to his glorious kingdom. When we have some problem, we become extremely selfish, not to mention caring for others. But Jesus was different. Being apprehensive of his going up to Jerusalem to be crucified, still Jesus was compassionate to the inhabitants of Trans-Jordan, the half-Gentiles.

Second, the harvest is plentiful (2).

Look at verse 2a. "He told them, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.'" This verse shows us the compassion of Jesus. To Jesus' eyes, the inhabitants of Trans-Jordan must be cared for and they also must hear the good news of the kingdom of God. But God's chosen people, a Bible teachers' nation, were corrupt. No one was interested in them. So Jesus said, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few." A few usually means there are several people. Here, few means nobody. And plentiful harvest refers to worldly people who are very sick with sin. But Jesus saw them most precious. It was a despairing situation. But Jesus asked them to pray for God's help. Verse 2b says, "Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." Here we see the great compassion of God. At that time, religious leaders were like brutal animals. Political leaders were so corrupt that people of the time were fearful all the time. Even though Jesus was on the way to Jerusalem, our Lord the good Shepherd wanted to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to all, missing no one.

Look at verse 3. "Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves." The seventy-two were like lambs. The worldly people were like grinning wolves. Lambs going to ferocious wolves is the same as committing suicide. But our Lord Jesus said, "Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves." Jesus was willing to save to the end.

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

Here Jesus tells them how to act and what to proclaim when they are sent. Look at verse 4. "Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road." This does not necessarily mean that the workers of God are supposed to go around to do God's work without carrying any money at all. Jesus tells them an inflexible principle. It is to depend on God only with all their hearts. In a spiritual harvest, one who uses what he has, such as his big mouth or money, will certainly fail to be a good harvester. One young man who helped his sheep with money impeded his fruitful harvest.

Jesus said, "Do not greet anyone on the road." Literally speaking, it sounds very unkind and rude. But its real point is that the workers of God should not look back on their past affairs. The workers of God must no more attach to the glittering world (9:62). They are the workers of God. Therefore, they must give their hearts to the proclamation of the good news of the kingdom of God.

The workers of God should be peace-makers. Read verses 5-8. These verses tell us how to deal with people in a mission field. "When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house'" (5). The great effect of the presence of Christ's servants is the imparting of peace to those who are in the torment of the devil. The workers of God are to be peace-makers in the deepest sense, as Jesus made peace between God and men by being a ransom for many. Those who accept this greeting with faith will enjoy peace and eternal life in their souls. But those who do not accept the greeting reject, in effect, the kingdom of God. In verse 7, Jesus was telling them to overcome all discomforts and inconveniences.

Particularly in this part, Jesus tells them to do what the workers of God should do. Look at verse 9. "Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you.'" In this verse, healing the sick means mainly healing men from their sickness of sin. Usually, spiritually sick people go around begging for human sympathy or human love. Human sympathy is good, but it does not heal spiritual sickness. One young man excessively sympathized with and fed two young men. In order to feed them, he also ate

lots of food. As a result, the three of them became like polar bears. The two sheep grew in beggar mentality. Soon they ran away.

What should we do, then? In order to plant the hope of God, first and last of all, we must teach the Bible. When we teach the Bible, we must teach them that Jesus came to this world to save men from their sins. In Mark 1:15 Jesus said, "The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" When we teach people the Bible, God works in them to help them repent of their sins. When they repent of their sins, Satan flees away from them. When they repent of their sins, the Holy Spirit comes upon them. Then they can experience the love of God. They can experience the peace of God. They can experience the joy of God. The last part of verse 9 says, "The kingdom of God is near you." This is also a warning to the ungodly. Those who believe in the kingdom of God have eternal life. But those who reject the good news of the kingdom of God will be in the time of inescapable judgment. Therefore, we must help all our sheep to put their hope in the kingdom of God.

The workers of God should not compromise (10-12). Jesus knew that his servants would receive much rejection. So he taught them what to do in case of rejection. "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.'" "The kingdom of God is near," indicates that the kingdom of God is given to those who believe in him. But to those who reject, the judgment of God would fall upon them. It will be harder than that of Sodom (12).

In this part, Jesus laments over his own unrepentant people. Read verses 13-15. "Woe 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. But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths." Jesus laments over unrepentant people most. May God help us to please Jesus through daily repentance.

Fourth, rejoice that your names are written in heaven (17-20).

The seventy-two came back with a sense of achievement and they said with joy, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name" (17). Jesus acknowledged their achievement and bragging mood. One of them said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name" (17). He must have been Bartholomew, a man of few words. When the seventy-two bragged about their achievements, Jesus replied in verses 18,19, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you." Jesus kept on saying, "However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (20). When Jesus said, "However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven," Jesus did not deny that it is good to rejoice because of their achievements. But he taught the servants of God to seek permanent grounds for joy in the fact that their names were written in the book of life. In doing God's work, we must rejoice that we have eternal life in our souls. Paul said in Philippians 2:12, "Therefore, my dear friends...continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling...."

Fifth, Jesus' joy and sorrow (21-24).

Let's 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 was despised and rejected while proclaiming the kingdom of God. But Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of God wholeheartedly. They did not listen in order not to repent. But there were a few believing people. For this, Jesus rejoiced with much thanks (21).

In verse 22, Jesus indirectly expresses his deep human loneliness and the agony of taking up his cross of mission. At the same time, he is overjoyed that the Father in heaven knows what he is doing. 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." Those who have decided to live for the glory of God know the loneliness of Jesus, and they know what Jesus has done for us. No one recognized Jesus or knew who he really was.

Rather, he was rejected and despised. But Jesus was very happy because his Father God knew him. Also, his Father knew what he was doing. The love relationship with God was his power source and the cause of all his sufferings and victories. Read verses 23,24. Then he turned to his disciples and spoke privately. The key point of these verses is: "You are blessed." Their situation was like that of lambs living among wolves. But they were blessed because they had the privilege of knowing Jesus and seeing him with their own eyes. May God bless us to be one of God's workers to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God. Amen.