

Luke: Primed to Receive Jesus
Sermon 3-3-2019
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Luke 10:1-24

After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. ²He said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. ³Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. ⁴Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. ⁵Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this house!’ ⁶And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. ⁷Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the laborer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. ⁸Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; ⁹cure the sick who are there, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ ¹⁰But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, ¹¹‘Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near.’ ¹²I tell you, on that day it will be more tolerable for Sodom than for that town. ¹³“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. ¹⁴But at the judgment it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than for you. ¹⁵And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? No, you will be brought down to Hades. ¹⁶“Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me.”

¹⁷The seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!” ¹⁸He said to them, “I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. ¹⁹See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you. ²⁰Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” ²¹At that same hour Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. ²²All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses

to reveal him.”²³ Then turning to the disciples, Jesus said to them privately, “Blessed are the eyes that see what you see!²⁴ For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it.”

Message:

(Play video at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=26z_KhwNdD8) As we begin the second-half of Luke, there are at least four things that connect with our passage today from the first-half. First, how John the Baptist prepares the way. Second, the connection with the parable of the sower, which we just studied two weeks ago. Third, the emphasis on ministry to the poor in the first-half. And lastly, the connection with the Exodus journey, especially what we read about last week in the connection between Jesus and Moses. Watch as these four connections unfold in our passage. “After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go.” Seventy-others. Meaning, there were seventy people other than the twelve disciples that Jesus knew believed in him and He trusted to send-out on His behalf. Earlier, in Luke 9, Jesus sent out the twelve in a very similar manner. Why did Jesus send them out in pairs? This might remind you of those Jehovah Witnesses or Mormons that come to your door. Did Jesus send them out in pairs so that they could be more powerful together? Did Jesus send them out in pairs so that they could have each others backs? Did Jesus send them out so that they could feel more confident ministering together? All of those are plausible. They were sent out by two because if a testimony was to be credible, according to Mosaic Law in Deuteronomy 19:15, two witnesses were required. So if something miraculous or supernatural happened, it was more likely to be a true testimony if two had experienced it together rather than just one individual. It’s almost as if Jesus sent them out by two because He expected many great things to happen. We also understand in this first verse that He sent the seventy “ahead of him.” So Jesus wasn’t with them, physically speaking, as they went to each household and every town. Similar to John the Baptist being sent ahead of Jesus to prepare the way for Him, the seventy are being sent ahead to prepare the way for Him. That’s the first connection.

Second connection—²²“He said to them, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.’” To “harvest” in the ancient world was to allude to judgment, the final judgment. Those who would be in the Kingdom of God and those who won’t make it. Jesus is building off of the earlier parable of the sower. The word of God was sown on these individuals. If the seed grew upon good soil, then it was ready for the harvest. It was ready to be claimed. If you skip ahead to verse 5-6, Jesus

says, “⁵Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this house!’ ⁶And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you.” Jesus knows that some will reject the seventy. And later in verse 8, Jesus says something similar, “⁸Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; ⁹cure the sick who are there, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ ¹⁰But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, ¹¹‘Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near.’ ¹²I tell you, on that day it will be more tolerable for Sodom than for that town. ¹³‘Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. ¹⁴But at the judgment it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than for you. ¹⁵And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? No, you will be brought down to Hades. ¹⁶‘Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me.’” If we go back to the parable of the sower, the people who reject the Word of God may be the people too busy to care, the busy seeds trampled on the path. Or snatched away by the “birds of the air” or the devil. Jesus says as much in verse 3, “See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves.” Jesus knows that the wolves may reject them and may even try to snatch away seeds of the word of God from those who are on the trampled path. It’s an easy prey. Another people that reject them could be those who like what they’re saying and they are intrigued, they may even be wowed by the miracles Jesus performed prior to the visit of the seventy, but the seeds fell on rock, they were not rooted or more deeply committed. They were along for the ride with the crowds and watching Jesus’ miracles, but when it came time for a deeper commitment, they moved on to the next buzz or the next “exciting” thing. These are not ready for the harvest. In the last example of the Parable of the sower, Jesus tells us that seed fell on good soil, but thorns of cares, riches and pleasures choked out the growth of the seed, the word of God. These are not ready for the harvest either.

How do we know if people are ready for the harvest? “⁵Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this house!’ ⁶And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person...” So it will not be grueling or feel like a tug-of-war or that you are forcing something upon them. There will be peace between you and that household BECAUSE Jesus has already planted the word of God on their hearts and it has landed on good soil and had good growth. Peace is one sign of a ready harvest. A similar sign is, “⁸Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you...” If you sense “welcome,” to their household and welcome of

conversation about Jesus and faith, then this is a household that is primed to receive, to grow and/or be harvested.

The third connection—Jesus’ emphasis on ministry to the poor. Now Jesus doesn’t say it explicitly in this passage, but I believe he implies it. “⁷Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the laborer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house.” Why should they remain in the same house? If they are received into a household, it may not be what they expected or wanted. So they may try to go to a different household for better living quarters or for better food. That’s why Jesus says, “...eating and drinking whatever they provide...” This is not the time to be picky about food. You want them to feel as comfortable with you as possible. So you eat what they provide. If you move to a “better” household with better quarters, you may miss out on the witness opportunity. This part made me think of a few years ago and when John and I visited a woman at someone’s request to see if we could aide her as a church. I had no idea what I was getting myself into. Immediately as we entered the house, we saw piles of newspaper and envelopes and just stuff everywhere. You could hardly move about in the home. The place smelled like cat piss. Even as we sat down on the seats and couch, we were literally sitting on envelopes of mail and scattered newspapers. The carpet had to be 50 years old. And the woman looked disheveled. I don’t tell you this in any kind of judgement of her, but just to illustrate that this wasn’t a place where John nor I wanted to stay for long. Yet, God called us to be there and to attempt to help this woman with her struggles. We don’t get to choose who needs help and who is open to the word of God, only God knows who are those people. And the people that are most commonly open to the word of God are those who are the most needy among us. A clue to this is also in verse 9, “...⁹cure the sick who are there, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’” So someone has to be sick in order for there to be a miraculous healing or cure. Who are usually the ones most in need of healing or a cure, the poor.

The last connection—the connection with the Exodus journey. After the Red Sea crashes on the Egyptians, what is the feeling that comes upon the Israelites? Freedom. The captives are set free from slavery and bondage. The heart of salvation in Jesus Christ is not to aggregate more converts for the sake of greater numbers, it’s that Jesus wants to set people free from the bondage of sin. This is alluded to in our passage. Jesus calls the seventy to cure the sick. “¹⁷The seventy returned with joy, saying, ‘Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!’ ¹⁸He said to them, ‘I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. ¹⁹See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you.’” The seventy come back excited because the seventy have not only cured the sick, but they have had

demons submit to them in the name of Jesus. They are amazed at the power and wonder of Jesus and the power he bestows to them as they go out in His name. But Jesus is careful here, “²⁰Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” It’s not about the miracles, signs and wonders performed by the seventy that’s the point. The point is that these miracles, signs and wonders set the captives free from sin and that it brings the harvest to heaven, to salvation in Jesus Christ. It’s so that just as the Israelites experienced freedom from the Egyptians, that the new followers of Jesus would also experience freedom and salvation in the name of Jesus Christ.

Alright, so this is all neat how all of this is interconnected, but what is the Lord saying to us today through this passage? There are plenty of sermons built into this text, but what I want you to focus on is how Jesus already primed the households to receive him and how Jesus invites us into partnership with Him. Does God, does Jesus, need us to turn the hearts of men towards Him? Technically, no. God is all-powerful and can do whatever God deems necessary. But, do you remember, maybe way back when, your child getting excited to do a task with you? How did that make you feel? It brought much joy and love to your heart, I imagine. So God, also invites us into partnership in ministry with Him as displayed in this scene. He knows that we are going to struggle and stumble. He knows that we may say the wrong things or have the wrong motives at times. But it’s the joy of people in partnership in ministry with God that please Him. So if you don’t have a strong love relationship with God, ministry and witness is going to feel more obligatory than delightful. I just spent some time with some friends the other weekend who have two 5-year old twins. And it reminded me of how much at that age kids are like sponges. You can give them the most mundane thing to do and they get super-excited about it. So you say, “let’s go clean the garage!” in the most exciting tone-of-voice as possible. And they are like “YEAH!!! Let me do it!!!” Imagine that same reaction from a teenager. I think the seventy had this same child-like enthusiasm for ministry. They eagerly enter into households not with fear or trembling, but with excitement of what God is going to do. And they come back to Jesus with that same excitement. Jesus wants to partner with us in ministry because he wants to see the joy that comes to His children when they witness, when we witness, the power of the kingdom of God. “²³Then turning to the disciples, Jesus said to them privately, ‘Blessed are the eyes that see what you see!²⁴For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it.’”

In our age and time, I know that many of us fear sharing the gospel. Will I appear forceful? Will I taint their view of God? Or, do I have to do it? Let’s start with that last one. If you have the attitude of duty and obligation in sharing the gospel, then you need to spend more time with the Lord. You need to spend more

time in prayer. Because I think you're missing out on the child-like love and joy with the Lord. I want to be careful here. Claiming the harvest is not about you doing more or about obligation or duty. It's out of your love relationship with the Lord, that these opportunities for harvest will present themselves to you. They will come with peace and welcome. It will be apparent that this is the time to share the good news of Jesus Christ. But if you are not close to the Lord through prayer and study of the word, you won't welcome these experiences or have any awareness of these amazing opportunities to work miracles, signs and wonders in the name of Jesus.

Now, the first two questions, will I appear forceful? Will I taint their view of God? Here's the beautiful part. I believe the parable of the sower and this passage illustrate that God is the one who prepares the way and who grows His word on the hearts of people. What Jesus is inviting us into here is to close the deal with Him. In verse 16, Jesus says, "¹⁶Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me." So if they reject you, Jesus is telling us not to take it personally!! It's not about us. We can brush our hands clean. It also may be an indication not to force the proposition of the gospel on to those who reject us. When they reject the gospel they are not rejecting you, they are rejecting Jesus. It tells us that the seed, the word of God, has not taken root yet and has not grown on good soil and is not ready for collecting the harvest.

So let me ask you this, who, around you, in your life, is God preparing for the harvest? We see a few hints in our passage. It may be those who are sick. Those who are ailing and are in need of healing. It may be those who are poor. It may be those who are poor in spirit. Maybe someone is going through a hard time. Hard times are prime opportunities to share the gospel. I remember when I was in chaplaincy. In one year in chaplaincy, I had more noticeable impact in ministry in one year than I've had all my other years of ministry combined. Why? Because these people are sick. They are sick physically. They are sick emotionally. They are sick spiritually. They are in such a vulnerable state that they are open to the gospel. The seed of God is planted on their hearts and it became a bounty of opportunities to nurture them and reap the harvest for God. Who do you sense God is preparing for the harvest? Who is hurting? Who is ailing? These are prime candidates. And if they reject you, they are not rejecting you, but Jesus. One of the best things you can do right now in preparation for harvesting, is pray. Again, next Sunday we will start our 40 days of prayer at Providence. And I'm giving a stretch goal of praying for 1 hour a day. If you can't think of a person that may be ready for the harvest, pray for God to show you. If you think of someone who is a prime candidate for a miracle to soften their heart and let the word of God plant on their heart, **WE NEED TO PRAY FOR THEM!!** We need to pray for a miracle in

them! Miracles are one of the prime ways God softens hearts. This is one of many reasons, I'm asking you to devote yourself to prayer. God wants to do amazing things through you and through Providence because he wants to see the joy of His children and more names enter the Kingdom of God. So let's pray Providence. Let's pray for miracles, signs and wonders! Let's be sensitive to the movement of God so that we can take more of an active role in the harvest! Amen!