

A Divine Appointment

Luke 10:1-24

In last week's message we considered the cost of discipleship. Jesus gave the challenge in verse 23 that if anyone would come after Him, that person must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow him. It is a call to radical living that goes against cultural norms in the 21st century which promotes self first and everything else a distant second. It's a call to put aside our will, our desires, our agenda to follow the will of Christ for our life. Last's week's message fleshed out what that cost entails as we considered the examples of three would be disciples. Jesus' challenge was to surrender what might just be the most difficult things we must consider surrendering if we would be a committed Jesus follower.

We must surrender riches.

We must surrender responsibilities.

We must surrender relationships.

Any one of those areas can hinder us from following Jesus. And then we closed with that very familiar song of challenge *I Surrender All*.

Jesus may be calling us to surrender certain creature comforts in order to follow Him.

He may be calling us to surrender certain responsibilities, things that can be good in order to follow Him.

He may be calling us to surrender certain relationships that may hinder us from following Him.

How willing are we to surrender our will for His?

Last week's passage is a good segue into today's text found in Luke 10:1-24. Let's look at this event from Jesus' perspective and consider three truths.

Jesus extends a commission

Jesus expresses a caution

Jesus exults in celebration

In view here for the followers of Jesus appointed to go out and spread the gospel is both faith and action

working in cooperation. Faith without works is dead and works without faith is hypocrisy. These disciples had to fully trust Christ if they were going to follow Christ and be His ambassadors.

I. JESUS EXTENDS A COMMISSION – v. 1-16

A. The Commission Had a Specific Plan – v. 1

As the cross looms ever so closely now, the Lord knows the urgency of His mission and the need to get word out about the coming kingdom of God. To effectively do this He appoints additional disciples to aid in this effort. The NIV indicates 72 were selected. Other translations state there were 70. Differences in early manuscripts make it unclear as to whether it is 70 or 72. There is enough evidence to support either number. The number is irrelevant. What is of concern is that those who were chosen had counted the cost and were willing to surrender their lives to obey Christ's command.

Now notice that Luke describes them as 72 others, indicating that the twelve disciples were not counted among this group. Two weeks ago we talked about the exclusivity of the disciples when another man was seen casting out demons in Jesus' name and the disciples didn't like it. They told him to stop because he wasn't part of their group. The disciples thought they had a corner on the market of performing miracles and anyone outside their group should be forbidden from doing the same.

Folks, it's a good lesson for us that we're not the only church in town. Other churches are not the competition. We should be working in cooperation to reach as many people for Christ as possible. It was Paul who told the Corinthians that some plant the seed of the gospel, some water that seed, but then God comes along and brings the increase.

It is so easy to be jealous of what others are doing, especially if they seem to be more successful or if

they do things a little differently. Keep in mind that when John told Jesus what they had done about the man casting out demons that it was shortly after nine of the disciples had failed to cast out the demon from the boy. Jealousy breeds contempt which breeds exclusivity. And we take up the chant of the old west “This town ain’t big enough for the two of us.” We don’t like it when someone new sets up a shop similar to ours.

Jesus had given a task to the 12 disciples early in chapter 9. Choosing the 72 additional disciples was not because the twelve had failed. In verse 10 it says they came back and reported to Jesus everything they did. Mark 6:12-13 tells us that they drove out many demons and healed many who were sick. Choosing the 72 was a way of distributing the work load among more people.

His plan required more people who could assist with the task. So Jesus appointed 72. They were appointed to a position for the purpose of service.

What did His plan entail? We see it in verse 1. They were sent out two by two ahead of Jesus to every town and place where He was about to go. Much like John the Baptist, who was the forerunner of the Messiah, they were to prepare the way for Jesus as well. John proclaimed “I am the voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Make straight the way for the Lord.’” He also told people to “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”

To announce His coming, these 72 were to go ahead of Jesus and inform each town and village that the Messiah was coming, that the kingdom of God was near. This preparation was not to spruce the town up and put out welcome banners. They were to prepare their hearts to receive Him.

Now here’s the plan for us. We have the same commission. The Lord is sending us out in the same way to prepare people for His coming. That commission was given to all who would be His

disciples. We are to warn others that Jesus will be coming. How are we doing?

Note also that His plan included sending them out in groups of twos. You would think strategically that they could have covered twice as much territory if they had gone out individually.

There is a business term that has been out for a couple of decades called synergy. In plain English it means that two people can get more done working together than they could if they worked alone.

God knew about the effects of synergy long before businessmen.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-13

Two people working together will produce greater results, but there are other factors to consider about this strategy.

Remember Jesus Himself said that He did not come to do away with the law. The Law stated that at the witness of two or three individuals a matter would be established.

1. They would be a witness for each other that what they were proclaiming was true.
2. They would guard against the possibility that the message might in some way be altered, watered down. There would be accountability.
3. They would provide mutual encouragement to each other when the going got tough.
4. They would be a mutual witness against a town if it rejected the message.

Jesus had a specific plan for the commissioning of these disciples. That commission extends to us. Jesus also had a specific prayer for those who were commissioned.

B. The Commission Had a Specific Prayer – v. 2

It is in verses that follow we see the instructions they were given as they were sent out. He tells

them to pray and He tells them what to pray for.

“The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field.”

Did you catch that? We often, especially at mission’s conferences, pray that God will raise up others to go into the fields that are ripened ready to be harvested. We pray for someone else to go. But notice what Jesus is saying here. In their going or as they were going, pray that the Lord of the harvest would raise up laborers for the work. It assumes that they are going and as they go, they pray for more laborers. It is active not passive discipleship.

Folks, we cannot sit on the side lines and pray for others to do the work. That’s not what Jesus is saying here. As we go, pray for more so that more people can hear the Gospel.

I’ll only speak for myself, but somehow I think we are all guilty of this. We have a relative or a neighbor or co-worker who is not saved, so we pray that someone will come into their life who can share the gospel. Well, guess what? You’re the someone. I’m the someone.

Jesus is telling them to pray for others to join in the work of going with the gospel, to spread the word that Jesus is coming.

Jesus is coming to earth—
 What if it were today?
 Coming in power and love to reign—
 What if it were today?
 Coming to claim His chosen Bride,
 All the redeemed and purified,
 Over this whole earth scattered wide—
 What if it were today?
 Glory, glory!
 Joy to my heart ‘twill bring;
 Glory, glory!
 When we shall crown Him king.

Glory, glory!

Haste to prepare the way;

Glory, glory!

Jesus will come someday!

In their going, in our going, pray specifically for more workers to join in proclaiming the coming of Jesus.

Jesus had a specific plan. He told them specifically what to pray for, now notice the specific purpose of the commissioned disciples.

C. The Commission Had a Specific Purpose – v. 3-16

The song I just referred to spoke of preparing the way with haste. There is urgency to the work they were called to do. The instructions given here are similar to those given to the disciples in chapter 9. They were to travel light, taking no provisions that might impede their going. In essence they were to trust the Lord for their daily provisions.

My Dad is here today, and I don’t think he would mind my telling you that in the 30 years of ministry at Barakel they never went out on deputation to raise support. They never sent out a prayer letter asking people to help with some need that came up. Mom and Dad’s testimony to us is a legacy of faith. They trusted God with all their heart and God provided all their needs along the way.

The 72 were to take nothing for the journey except faith in God to provide, and they were to go in haste. “...do not greet anyone on the road.”

Now you might be thinking to yourself that sounds rather rude. But you need to understand greetings in the Eastern and Middle Eastern cultures. Greetings were long drawn out social affairs. It wasn’t merely a nod of the head as you passed others on the road. They didn’t just say “Hi, hope you have a great day. Nice weather we’re having.”

And it wasn't just greeting those they knew.

Greetings were a problem because they were lengthy, filled with small talk with everyone they encountered. You were expected to ask and answer such questions as where you were going; where did you come from; what's your name; how many children did you have.

Greek scholar A.T. Robertson called them "tedious, complicated, and meddlesome..."

Depending on the relationship with the person you were greeting, there was a verbal greeting followed by a gesture with the hand with no physical contact. Notice in our text that as they entered a home they were to greet it with "Peace be to this house." Then there was the formal kiss. They would grab each other by both shoulders, pull toward each other and then kiss the right cheek followed by a kiss on the left cheek. A mouth to mouth kiss demonstrated affection and was apparently the kind of kiss given by Judas in the garden with Jesus at His betrayal prompting Jesus to ask "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?"

After the kiss there would be the customary exchange of small talk which could last a long time. Jesus told them not to engage in such greetings because it was more important to deliver the message of the gospel.

Now, I'm all for friendship evangelism and lifestyle evangelism, but at some point we have to get to the main point which is the gospel.

As they went into each town the kind of hospitality given to them would indicate the kind of reception the gospel would receive. In that town they were to do two things, both resulted in healing.

1. Offer physical healing

As a demonstration of the validity and authenticity

of the message they were proclaiming was true, they were to heal the sick. Miracles substantiated the message.

2. Offer spiritual healing

They were to proclaim that the kingdom of God was near. Luke used this term 30 times in his gospel. "The kingdom of God is both a present reality and a future hope." It is a present reality as one repents of sin and confesses salvation in Christ alone so that the rule of Christ in the heart of the believer is established thereby transferring him from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. Jesus is the only way into this kingdom. This kingdom is also a future hope in that it will one day be the place where all saints will reside in permanent residence with Christ as ruler.

They were to prepare the way for this kingdom through the Messiah who was coming to their town. People were to spiritually prepare themselves for His arrival. Are we ready for His coming? Are we going to help others prepare for His coming?

If they were welcomed into a home, it meant the town was receptive to the gospel. If they were not welcomed into a home, it meant the town rejected the gospel. If the town rejected the gospel then they were to make a public proclamation against the town symbolized by shaking the dust from their sandals. This was a way of saying that judgment would come for their rejection of the gospel.

Jesus gave a stern warning for those who rejected the message of these disciples. In essence He said that to reject the message would be to reject Him and to reject Him was to reject the Father. In the warning Jesus describes three Gentile towns and three Jewish towns. The three Gentile towns were known for their unbridled corruption and the destruction meted out by God for their blatant sin. But Jesus says that the three Jewish towns would

receive greater punishment for their rejection of the message told them than the three Gentile towns. Why is that?

The Jewish towns mentioned as examples were one's who had firsthand witness of the miracles and message of Jesus yet they chose either to reject Him or in the case of Capernaum where we have no record that they mistreated Jesus, they were merely indifferent to Him. The Gentile nations were judged for their sin, but the greater judgment fell on the Jewish towns because they had the message of the gospel and refused to believe it. The Gentile towns did not. This shows us that there will be a greater judgment on those who hear the Word of God, know the truth of what it says and still refuse to believe it. The more light we have, the more searching the judgment. This passage also tells me that not everyone will enter the kingdom of God.

In this section Jesus is declaring three important truths about the work they were about to embark on. It would be difficult. Harvesting is a lot of work. It's hard work. There are long days of hard work. We think of harvesting as just the bringing in of what was planted. But it begins months earlier. The field has to be prepared by plowing. Then there is the sowing or planting followed by the weeding or spraying to keep the weeds down. It may include watering if the farmer has an irrigation system. Then there is the reaping. In between all that the equipment has to be maintained and barns or silos prepared. It's difficult work.

Jesus also says it would be dangerous work. It would be like going into enemy territory. One author noted "Any man who takes Jesus Christ seriously becomes the target of the devil." Jesus warned of persecutions and hardships. In Paul's testimony he shares all the maladies he encountered for his faith and the preaching of the gospel. Know that when you go to share the gospel it will be dangerous work.

The work would require discipline and faith. The work was urgent so necessitated them being diligent in it, not giving up when things got tough but forging ahead, trusting God for deliverance and provision.

Like them, we are to go and share the good news. Whether you know it or not, we are all evangelists. When we put out on Facebook that people should try a recipe, we are evangelizing. When we tell your friends about a new song or a new album they should buy, we are evangelizing. When we recommend a book or a store or a restaurant, we are evangelizing. In how we live and in what we say we are evangelizing. We evangelize with our attitude or conduct at work or school or in the home. We evangelize with our words at the checkout counter or on the phone with some customer service representative about a problem we are having with a product or a service. What kind of message are we proclaiming to the "towns" we have been sent to?

John MacArthur writes "True evangelism begins with a proper assessment of the plight of sinners, with an awareness of their desperate condition and with the realization that they all face the terrifying reality of eternal punishment."

What he is saying is that we need to understand the gravity of the sinner's plight and do what we can to share hope found only in Christ.

So, while I have made a friend at the gym where I work out, even though he knows I'm a pastor and even though he has told me that he doesn't talk about politics or religion, I need to see him through the compassionate eyes of Jesus knowing the urgency of the Lord's return and realizing the horrific, eternal punishment that awaits him without Christ. We need to speak the truth, but we need to speak the truth in love with urgency.

If I saw my neighbor's house on fire, I wouldn't hesitate for a moment to do all I could to get his attention and tell him of the danger he was in because of the fire. I wouldn't think to myself, that well, I don't want to come across as rude or imposing telling him some bad news. As a friend I'll get around to telling him someday." Would it be difficult? Yes! Would it be dangerous? Yes! Is it urgent? Yes! People need the Lord.

When we go out to tell people about the Gospel all we can do is warn them. They are left with the decision to accept or reject the message.

Jesus has extended a commission to His disciples to go with the gospel. That includes you and me.

II. JESUS EXPRESSES A CAUTION – v. 17-20

A. Jesus Cautions About Their Enemy – v. 17-19

Our text tells us that they returned to share their joy with Jesus about the things they were able to accomplish, especially in regard to demons submitting to them. Jesus then cautioned them about the enemy. They needed to be reminded that the enemy is real and any success on their part was due only because of the power He gave them to defeat the enemy. Satan's power had been broken by Jesus and their ability to cast out demons in the power of Jesus was a defeat for Satan.

When Jesus says He saw Satan fall from heaven He is not referring to the original fall of Satan.

He is not speaking of His victory over Satan in the desert temptations.

He is not speaking of the times He cast out demons. He is not speaking of the defeat that will come at the cross.

He is not speaking of the future time when Satan will be cast into the lake of fire.

The phrase "I was watching" is in the imperfect tense suggesting a continual process rather than a one-time event. Jesus may be suggesting that every

time a soul is snatched from the kingdom of darkness ruled by Satan, he suffers a defeat, he falls. In the context of what Jesus is describing "snakes and scorpions" does not mean they will be unharmed by those venomous creatures if they handle them, but rather it metaphorically refers to Satan and his minions.

Throughout the New Testament we are cautioned repeatedly to be wary of the enemy who lurks about seeking someone to devour. Perhaps no passage speaks so strongly as when Paul wrote to the Ephesians instructing them to put on the full armor of God in order to stand against the devil and to stand their ground. It's true for us too.

Jesus cautions about the enemy. The moment we let our guard down thinking the enemy is defeated is the moment he seizes to strike a stinging blow. Jesus cautioned about their enemy.

Jesus also cautions about their exuberance.

B. Jesus Cautions About Their Exuberance – v. 20

They return with great enthusiasm much like the disciples when they returned. They were overjoyed by their achievements, but Jesus gave them another word of caution. Instead of rejoicing that demons were subject to them they should be joyful that their names were written in heaven. That is something to truly be ecstatic about. Like in the example of Job, God may allow trials to come, but demons can never take away our salvation or affect the security of our names in heaven. Through our faith in Christ for salvation He etched our names in heaven, if you will, with His own blood. That is truly something to be joyful about. "Man's salvation is more important than the power to overcome the evil one or escape his harm."

Once we are saved our names are forever recorded in heaven.

Dan 12:1 “At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people – everyone whose name is found written in the book – will be delivered.”

Revelation 3:5 “He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white, I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before My Father and His angels.”

If we are to be joyful about anything, let’s first and foremost rejoice that our names are written in heaven. Jesus gives a caution regarding what we should truly be joyful about.

Jesus extends a commission
Jesus expresses a caution
Jesus exults in celebration

III. JESUS EXULTS IN CELEBRATION – v. 21-24

A. Jesus Celebrates the Father – v. 21-22

Although He gives a word of caution here, Jesus was full of joy over the work of the 72. His joy was prompted by the Holy Spirit. In this passage we have a clear picture of the Trinity – the Father to whom Jesus’ gives thanks, Jesus who is in the midst of doing the will of the Father, and the Holy Spirit who is at work in the life and ministry of Jesus and by whom Jesus is prompted to be joyful.

So remember that when something wonderful happens and you are prompted to give thanks, note the work of the Holy Spirit prompting that response in you.

Jesus thanks God for revealing the truth of the gospel message to those who are like children because the so called wisdom of man has blinded many supposing that they don’t need such fairy tales or archaic teachings. Jesus thanks the Father

for revealing it to hearts that are humble, like that of children.

We need to give thanks to God when He reveals the truth of His Word to others in a way that prompts them to seek God and the salvation He offers by grace through faith.

B. Jesus Celebrates the Faithful – v. 23-24

The disciples were living in a time that the Old Testament kings and prophets longed for; a day they knew would come, but did not get to see. It was a privilege for the disciples to live in the age when the Messiah came, but it was coupled with great responsibility.

Hebrews 11:13 “All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance.”

We are living in an unprecedented age. The marvels of modern technology are making translation work easier and faster. The efforts of groups like New Tribes Mission and Wycliffe Bible Translators are spreading the gospel by getting the printed Word of God into the languages of more and more people groups faster than ever. Teaching them to read and write they in turn are commissioning new believers to take the gospel further into other unreached people groups. Through technology like movies, The Jesus Film project is taking the gospel into remote villages and in closed countries sharing the gospel through video. But the work is difficult. More workers are needed for the harvest. Not necessarily to go to other parts of the world, although that may be your calling, but more workers to go across the street, or to the next cubicle, or the next locker to share the gospel.

The Lord is coming soon. Will you help prepare for that time? You have already been commissioned. The question is will you be committed to that task?