

Apostolic Commission (Luke 10:1-24)



A. Sending Out the Seventy - Preparation of the Messengers

1. It is a Great Privilege to be sent out by the Lord to preach the gospel of the Kingdom. This was the second wave of apostolic mission, expanded from 12 to 70. Luke notes that this takes place as Jesus makes His journey toward Jerusalem. The man called by Jesus to preach the gospel (9:60) probably did not make the seventy sent out here. 'Many are called but few are chosen.'
2. The Mission Context: (1) The greatness of the harvest – *'the harvest is truly great' (10:2) or 'plentiful' or 'already white for harvest'* (C.f. Matt 9:37-38; John 4:35-36) Expect to reach many with the gospel when you are sent out in His name; (2) The smallness of workers – *'but the labourers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into His harvest.'* (10:2) Pray always for the harvest workers to be sent out, and pray for co-workers for the good co-workers are hard to find; (3) There are many dangers in the work of the Lord – *'Go your way, behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves.'* (9:3) We must not be naïve. We will find ourselves as sheep among pack of wolves.
3. Preparation of the Messengers: *'Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals...'* Jesus' preparation of the 70 was not to equip them to be 'self-sufficient' in the mission field, but to be 'insufficient' within their own resources. Why? 'The stripping away of self-sufficiency produces greater dependence on God.'
4. Labourer's Wage: (1) 'For the labourer is worthy of his wages.' i.e. Do not beg. Do not feel bad to receive your daily needs from the people you are sent to minister. It is not a pity-donation, but *a just wage for labouring in God's harvest field.* (2) But the principle is that the workers (missionaries) are to receive their support from the people they are sent to minister. This actually helps to form a healthy 'two-way relationship' between the labourer and the people receiving the gospel. It is a way of expressing their gratitude for the gospel, and helps establish the missionary - their acceptance of him and his belonging within the community, especially in long-term work. (3) Caution to labourers: *Do not move from house to house* looking for a better deal, better lodging, better food, etc. If your basic needs are met stay there, until you have finished the work that God sent you to do in that town. One condition: the labourer's host must be a 'man of peace', i.e. without hidden agenda. If your host is someone with selfish agenda, your peace (goodwill) will not rest on him, *but will return to you*, so that you can give that 'peace' to the next person who is worthy of stewarding it. 'Shalom' is tangible spiritual blessing that has been entrusted to the labourer, to impart to the one serving him in practical ways, so that his host will receive far greater blessing than what he has given. E.g. Jeremiah's blessing on Baruch (Jer 45)
5. Urgency: *'Greet no one along the road...Do not go from house to house.'* (10:4-8) We are not to be rude, but we are not to pass the time socialising. Never lose the sight of the mission! *Your mission is not to be accepted or to be popular with the people you have been sent to, but to proclaim to them the good news of the kingdom.* Why? Our message has eternal consequences far beyond our imagination! *Not everyone will receive the message of the kingdom.* Jesus said we must be prepared to say, *"The very dust of your city which clings to us we wipe off against you. Nevertheless, know this, that the kingdom of God has come near you."* (10:11) *Jesus pronounced, 'but I say to you that it will be more tolerable in that Day for Sodom than for that city.'* (10:12)
6. Consequences of Preaching the Gospel: *'Woe to you, Chorazin. Woe to you, Bethsaida!'* (10:13-16)

When we preach the gospel we carry 'serious weight of responsibility'. Every time we preach the gospel, we make the hearers more guilty or less guilty. Jesus emphasizes that rejecting the gospel is worse sin than the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah, cities guilty of homosexual practice. People are sent to heaven or hell, not because they have or have not done enough good to outweigh the bad (everybody's sin far outweighs their good work), but because of their attitude to Jesus. If people reject Jesus and what He has done for them when He took their sin upon Himself to freely forgive them of all their sin, then their sins remain unforgiven when they die, and their souls end up going to the horrible place called 'hell'. And Jesus states that people's attitude to His messengers who deliver His messages to them, is really their attitude to Jesus Himself. That same attitude is the very attitude they have toward God.

Where is Chorazin today? Where is Bethsaida today? These were bustling cities in Jesus' day, but they are totally destroyed today. No one lives in those cities. Capernaum is also gone. Today the three cities are

archaeological sites bearing witness to Jesus' words spoken over them 2000 years ago. "Woe unto you." There was a little town called Tiberias in Jesus' days (Jn 6:23). This town survived and today it is a thriving town. Why? Jesus did no miracles there. Tiberias was better off than these three towns who did not repent and believe when Jesus preached and did mighty miracles there (Mt 9:1). Why then do we even preach the gospel? So that some people will be saved by believing in the gospel. This is the joy of the harvest workers.

B. Return of the Seventy - Lessons from the Mission

1. Disciples' Joy - The joy of the Seventy upon their return is at a different level than enjoying an evangelism seminar. It is experiential joy. They must have ministered with tremendous power and authority over demons, that Jesus saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning! 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name!' (10:17) They were so excited at what they have seen and done, that Jesus must have detected danger signs, so He cautions them.

Don't get so carried away by the power of God upon you. You must rejoice more in what God has done for you than what you have done for Him. You must rejoice more in God's salvation and grace for you than in God's power and gifts on you. Why? These things can easily go to our heads. If you rejoice more in the gifts you possess than the grace you have received, your relationship with God is dangerously out of line. One produces gratitude and humility. The other produces entitlement and eventually spiritual pride. This is crucial in being used by God without going off the handle. There is great joy when God uses us powerfully. Yes, rejoice for a while. But afterward, you must rejoice more because your name is known in heaven. Rejoice more for the grace of eternal security for your soul than the greatness of power on your ministry.

Human relationships are the same. When we can no longer see how much grace we have received in a relationship but are far more aware of how much we have given, that relationship will begin to deteriorate. Note, this was Martha's basic frustration.

2. Jesus' Joy – Jesus 'thrilled with joy' (Moffatt), i.e. Jesus rejoiced spontaneously, powerfully moved by the Holy Spirit. He gave thanks to His Father because (1) God has revealed the most precious revelation to the lowly and humble. The seventy apostles who just caused Satan's fall were the 'babes'; (2) "No one knows the who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him." Jesus calls Himself the Son only here in the Synoptic Gospels. *The most sacred hidden relationship between God the Father and the Son Jesus Christ is mentioned by Jesus here. Only through Jesus, common people can know the Father as He truly is. Jesus revealed this sacred relationship to the Seventy and through Seventy to others! This gave Jesus great joy, the joy which was set before Him as He faced the cross! (10:21-22)*
3. *'Blessed are the eyes which see the thing you see; for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not seen it, and to hear what you hear, and have not heard it.'* (10:23-24) Are you blessed? To know the Son of God through the Father and to know the Father through the Son by the Holy Spirit?

C. Questions and Reflections

1. It is an awesome privilege to preach the gospel. If the Lord calls you, then obey. 'Many are called, but few are chosen.' Worker is worthy of his wage. Don't take rejections personally. Pray for workers to be sent out into the harvest field.

If you are thinking of sharing the gospel with someone, pray with another believer you can partner with. You don't have to do it alone. Find another believer with whom you can labour together for effective witnessing. What a joy to share the gospel with someone. This is both a great privilege and an awesome responsibility.

2. Do you believe we are living at a time of the promise when the Lord will pour out His Spirit for great harvest of souls? Do you believe God wants to use you? Do you believe that God calls you to cast out demons and heal the sick in Jesus' name? *Why don't we pray in faith for the empowerment of the Spirit?*
3. Are you rejoicing more in the grace of God for you than the gifts of God on you? Are you rejoicing more in what God has done for you and what you have done for God? Jesus rejoiced greatly because the most sacred revelation - His relationship with the Father - was revealed to the Seventy and then through them to others. Only through Jesus! Let us thank the Lord for saving us. May the Lord restore the joy of His salvation to us today. Amen.