

Jesus' Mission Team

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[0 : 0 0] I like us today this morning to open God's Word in the passage that we read in Luke's Gospel chapter 10 and look at that passage today before the baptism.

I wonder if when we were reading through that chapter that you wondered what it was all about and you wondered, well, it doesn't seem very relevant to me and it seems a bit distant.

What do you see when you read this passage? Did you think about that as we read the passage together? Did it seem a little bit distant from your kind of reality and your life, even maybe as a Christian unheard of, villages, kind of fanatical messengers going around healing and preaching and roving around the countryside.

Seems a different world. No connection maybe to the world that you've come from this morning. Your day-to-day world and your day-to-day living.

And that's a challenge I think for us all. I think it's a challenge for us as Christians as well. Because we need to read Scripture and we need to remember as we are looking at God and His Word that we must do so by faith and we must see beyond sometimes or not beyond but see and understand the reality of this message that was given in a distinct historical setting and to see by faith what sometimes you can't see simply by looking at it as it were just with flesh and blood, looking at just the account, just the story.

[1 : 5 0] Because what I want to do is to take this passage and remind ourselves how much it applies to us and how relevant it is for our day-to-day living and how challenging it is for us even though we may feel that the culture and the names and the situations and the commands of Jesus to the 72 seem a bit distant from our own 21st century living.

But Christ clearly speaks to every Christian through His Word and He's clearly speaking to us in this passage.

We appoint 72 people on a short-term mission. These 72 were undoubtedly a real number of people but they were also or the number itself is a symbolic number.

Very often the numbers in Scripture are symbolic. Just as the 12 were sent out earlier and we looked at that passage earlier in our study, they were sent out to lead and very much sent out with the same commission as was sent out here.

So the 72 would seem clearly to symbolise, if not the leadership of the church, then the church itself, a symbolic number of all of God's people.

[3 : 1 1] And here, although they are a real mission team, a real number, there are principal truths that apply not just to them but beyond them to us as those who are Christians today under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Today some of the commands to them were situations specific to their own short-term mission, just as any leader would give specific guidelines to a mission team.

But the principles behind them still apply to how we think of mission and how we think of our lives today. Because just as the 72 were sent by the Lord Jesus Christ, He said, go.

So Christ calls us as His people to work for Him. Every Christian, and I'm not speaking here about short-term mission, with a great night on Wednesday night listening to all the reports back from people who had been serving in different short-term missions in the summer, not speaking about that specifically, but rather as our lives as Christians, the moment we come to Christ that we are a sent people, that we are a people with a life to live, with a commission, the great commission, make disciples of all people, baptising them in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, that we are a sent people to work for Him.

And the specific guidelines that we find in this passage are ones that remind us that Jesus knows and understands what we are asked to do as those to go out, as ambassadors for Jesus Christ in our lives, and to see our lives, not as random or vain or where we are plucking little bits of Christian service out of the air.

[5 : 01] But everything we do is for Christ's sake and for His glory and in His name. So what about this calling that we have as Christians, and I'm not speaking about leaders specifically, or ministers or trainee ministers or anyone else missionaries, but every believer symbolised by this number of 72, what about our calling?

What is it that we can take from this passage that is a comfort and a strength and a challenge and a reminder to ourselves? Well surely Jesus appreciates our vulnerability.

Go. I'm sending you out like lambs among wolves. He says go, you better stay in the fold because there's a lot of wolves out there.

You better just not serve because it's too difficult. He says go, and he makes things clear. I'm sending you as lambs among wolves. He appreciates the vulnerability that this team had as they went out.

He was saying I'm no, it's going to be difficult. You're going to be opposed. People are going to criticise and condemn what you do. You're going to be in danger. You're at odds to the world.

[6 : 08] The odds aren't good to use gambling technology. And there's a great fragility there for you. He knows that. He appreciates our vulnerability.

Is that any different today? Is it any different for us as believers that we go as Christians into the world and are vulnerable as a result?

We're vulnerable and it seems the odds are stacked against us and that it's difficult and we are meek and we are opposed and there's no hope of victory because we are lambs among wolves as it were.

We're using that pictorial language. But the great thing for us today is that God still sends us. As Christians we can't just then use that. Say, oh that's so difficult. It's so problematic.

I think I'll just stay within the fold. I think I'll just take the advantages and the benefits but not share the gospel with my friends and those who desperately need to hear about Jesus Christ.

[7 : 09] The great thing is He knows. I'm sending you, He says. I'm not sending you to a party. I'm sending you as lambs among wolves.

He knows and He still sends us but He does so with His grace and with His help and with His power and with His love and with His protection.

So He understands our vulnerability. But with more than that He also requires from us single-mindedness as believers.

All of us are required by grace and in relationship with Him to be single-minded. He doesn't want us to be double-minded.

He doesn't want us to think about Christ now and again but really I'm still very attached to an unbelieving world and its philosophies and thinking and ideas.

[8 : 03] He wants us to be single-minded. He gives that focus to the 72 as they go out. He reminds them, don't take a purse or bag or sandals, don't greet anyone on the road when you enter the house and so on.

He says to them, you know, that I want you on this and for them it was a short term mission. I want you to be single-minded. Don't take extra shoes, you're not going to need them. Don't spend ages on the roadside with long kind of, long greetings that the Middle Eastern peoples kind of indulged in which took ages and seemed to just go on forever.

He wasn't telling them to be impolite. He was just saying, don't get waylaid by that. Show them that you're on an urgent message. When you get to a place, stay put in that house. Don't wonder about looking for better houses, maybe on suite and different things.

Be content with what the house should go to and if they give you food, just accept that food. Don't get involved in secondary issues. If it's not kosher, well just eat it anyway and then take it.

And don't make an issue out of the food that they give you if it's not prepared in the right way. And just accept because he wants their focus and their urgency to be on the message and on their mission.

[9 : 22] And so he says, please be single minded and that is why he gives them these specific instructions on this mission.

Now these kind of specific instructions don't really apply to us at that level unless we're on a very similar kind of mission. But the principle of single mindedness surely does, that we are to be single minded to the core of our being for Jesus Christ and Jesus reminds us in our calling that we are to live for Him and glorify Him and enjoy Him forever.

Serve Him and share Him and may that be the core of your life. Don't he says get sidetracked into secondary issues, into issues that are maybe significant in and of themselves but deflect from the kingdom work and deflect from your calling.

Don't make big deals out of things that ultimately will not make a difference in the kingdom of God. Don't live for other causes, our causes.

Jesus Christ, we have a cause, our causes Christ because we love Him and because He has done so much for us and because He is our Lord and we serve Him.

[10 : 40] So don't kind of have Him just as an added extra, an additional part of our lives, the religious bit, but that He is our all and that Christ subsumes our every vision and our every decision and our ambition and all that we are.

And we're not to share Him with another or live for another ambition. I don't say we can't have ambition but it's submissive to the Lordship of Christ and is part of our calling to serve Him.

The urgency He wants from us in the light of eternity. Short time here. Short time, you might think it's long. The younger you are, the longer you think it's going to be.

But it's short and those of us who are getting older will testify that years go faster and faster and time gets shorter and shorter and opportunities become fewer and fewer to serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

But He wants us to have that as our goal and He wants us to serve Him with single-mindedness. And also of course He gives us a message and we recognise that.

[11 : 56] He gave the people in this mission team, the 72, a message and the message was, you know, the Kingdom of Heaven is near. Kingdom of God is near.

The Gospel speaks a lot about the Kingdom of Heaven. The Kingdom of God, Matthew speaks a lot about the Kingdom of Heaven. Luke often speaks about here the Kingdom of God, the same thing. The Kingdom of God is near.

He had an urgent message. He wanted the people to hear that the Messiah had come, that the great work of the cross was about to happen and that the new covenant was about to be unfolded and unfurled before them and that the way of grace was to be made clear, repent and believe.

The Kingdom of Heaven is near. Great message that He gave to them, a realised Messiah. And He backed up that great message for them by giving them as He gave the 12 the ability to do miracles, authenticating the message to them.

They would know that that was authenticating the message, that it had the authority of God behind it. And not only did they have that to authenticate the message and to invite people to come to the King, but also they spoke powerfully and authoritatively of the danger of rejecting.

[13 : 17] Taking historical precedent, Tyre and Sidon and other villages and towns and speaking of the importance of not turning their back because of the privileged days that they were in, that they were seeing things that if people in Tyre and Sidon had seen they would have repented years ago in sackcloth and ashes, reminding them of the privilege of the day, reminding them of the solemnity and even visually showing them that way.

If they'd ejected taking their shoes off and wiping the dust off their feet, a powerful symbolism that would have been known and understood by those who were seeing it in these villages and towns.

A powerful message. What's our message? What do we go out with today? Kingdom of Heaven is near.

The Kingdom of God is near. Is that what we say? Well, post cross, post resurrection, post ascension, post spirit filled, we say submit to Christ as King.

That's the message we have. That we are the lords. That Christ is the sovereign. He's ascended to the right hand of the Father. He is a redeemer and our Savior and we are telling people to submit to Christ as King.

[14 : 36] Now you say, okay, that's fine. How do we do that? How do we go out with that message today to my friends, to the people I know? If I said submit to Christ as King, they'd laugh at me.

They don't know what that's like. What's that all about? If we've struggled sometimes to contextualize and make significant this message, how much more people who maybe have no Christian background that are going to say submit to Christ as King, what's that all about?

People not steeped in the Old Testament, for whom it's not cool to be submissive anyway, who are maybe, and I'm not using technical terms here, but maybe practical Democrats, Republicans, I'm not using American terminology, but who don't live and who don't know and who haven't experienced absolute monarchy.

We're under a monarchy here, but it's really a figurehead monarchy in the sense that it's not a powerful decision making monarchy at that level. So the whole idea of lordship and kingship at that level is alien to us as Democratic.

Republican, can I say that? Or not really, but you know what I mean. In terms of our kind of thinking, it's difficult for us to accept even the exclusivity of that claim, very unpopular today, the whole idea of exclusivity.

[16 : 01] Well, how do we go with that message? We are sent people. We can't just say, ah, it's too hard today then. It's impossible. We'll just leave God to do it.

No, He's sending us. He's sending us out, you know? He's sending us, and we have to work through this with our friends and in our company.

How are we going to share the gospel in a way that's meaningful? We don't just want to splurge out words to them and think somehow that it was a magic incantation that God will bless. We want them to know and we want them to believe.

Surely then, it must, part of the answer must be in us as Christians, living our lives under His Lordship.

In other words, being practical examples of showing or submitting to Christ as King. That is what's going to speak to people, primarily, if we are people who are a visual sermon, a visual message, a visual demonstration of what it means to submit to Christ as King.

[17 : 05] That's where they're going to find it, isn't it? That's where they're first going to see it. We are their first port of call. They are Christian. We are Christians. They are looking at us and they want to see what it means to submit to the Lordship of Christ in our lives.

People set free by the power of Christ and the cross. People who are loved by the divine God and sovereign of the universe. People who are forgiven.

People who are grace motivated. People who know His joy. People who have a willing obedience and not a grudging, grumbling, moaning, dragging the feet of obedience.

People who are transforming and being transformed, consistent, upright, pure. People who are living out life under His Lordship so that people see this Savior as their Lord.

Practically, they're seeing what that means, that He is first in their hearts. Within that, surely, it must include confessing the ugliness of our own hearts.

[18 : 13] Not so much always wagging a finger and pointing at the ugliness of society and everyone around us, but recognizing we needed a Savior. We need cleansing.

We need washed. We need our motives and our desires and our thinking made pure from within by the Lord Jesus Christ and showing them that we have had this transformation within our hearts and confessing that and sharing that.

So often people look at the church and they say, you think you're better than us. You think you've got a message and you're coming to preach at us. No, we're saying, look, I needed this Christ.

This Christ has renewed my heart and this is the Christ who is my Lord I offer to you by living submission to Christ as King.

And that includes and must include for us knowing the Christ to whom we submit, knowing the Christ as He's revealed, you know, and for us that must be and must involve grasping His revealed truth.

[19 : 20] The revealed truth about Himself, knowing why we believe it really isn't enough to believe on the coattails of someone else. It'll never do.

It'll never do just to go with the flow and kind of loosely hold on to that. We must know the Christ ourselves as He is revealed and have our thinking tested and tried and challenged and thought through and grounded.

We must be workers first in our own hearts with our knowledge of Christ. And we must first work through all the arguments that we're going to be faced with in the world and come to conclusions about them for ourselves so that we're not flummoxed and so that we're not silent when people say, but what about?

What about this and that because we know the Christ and have worked through these issues and these problems and these difficulties, praying for wisdom, praying for strength and insight, working through effort.

Say a little bit more about that just before we finish. So submitting to Christ as King, that's our message. But also warning about the consequences of rejecting Christ.

[20 : 34] Being very unpopular and difficult to apply today to a society that isn't afraid of God, isn't afraid of what we might say or what preachers might say, aren't afraid of what Christians will say.

Don't respond to authoritative demands and claims and even warnings. But on the list, we have this message and this authority to warn people of the consequences of rejecting.

How can we do that? I think that's very difficult and I don't pretend to have all the answers. But through prayer and understanding, we'll be able to warn others when we have come to recognise that things are not as they seem.

We might think, oh, warning about judgment in the future. I'm not sure if we really understand or believe that. And until we can see it for ourselves and believe and understand it in the light of the cross and in the light of God's Word and what He's saying here, we're never going to want to share that with others, aren't we?

Because we don't believe it. So it's very important and I'm taking us right back to the beginning here. It's very important for us to remember that things are not as they seem.

[21 : 51] And we must look beyond the bare text here and the bare historical story of Jesus sending out a mission to Him and recognise that Jesus is also encouraging us here to see something deeper, some spiritual depth and realities.

And as we see them in our Christian lives then, we will be more powerfully motivated to share that with others. So I'm asking you again today, what do you see in this chat?

What do you see here that would motivate you or change you or challenge you or move you? What are you seeing when you come to Scripture? What are we seeing?

Are we simply seeing a story of an itinerant preacher sending out his people on dusty roads? Is that what we see today? Distant from 21st century Edinburgh, concrete pavements and sophisticated thinking.

We need to see a real applicable spiritual dimension for ourselves. Jesus hints at it in this passage as we close. Christ has defeated the power of evil.

[23 : 05] Jesus says, there's a bunch of 72 people going around preaching the Gospel. Is that what we see? Because what Jesus sees is I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.

That's what Jesus sees, something altogether much more significant, something much greater and something much more powerful. That this is testimony to and pointing towards a great spiritual victory.

That the kingdom of God, kingdom of heaven is near, is not some kind of cheap advertising, marketing plan to bring people to the crucifixion.

Jesus sees something that they probably even themselves can't see. They were heralding something absolutely massive. That this Savior, that this Christ, that this cross, that this resurrection speaks of the defeat of evil.

We all have that and I'll recognize that in our world. The victory over sin in our own hearts, on oppression, the freedom from guilt, the power of death and the destruction of death in our lives.

[24 : 24] That Jesus Christ sees in all of this message and all of this work that He's doing, Satan falling from a great height, evil defeated, Christ on the cross, paying the price, winning a victim.

We'll learn more about that tonight when we're looking at the power of God in our study, the doctrine of God. Brilliant stuff, tremendous.

So that what Jesus sees here is something that's not just a wandering group of people in the Middle East that's completely irrelevant to us, but He sees a big picture that affects you today and affects me at the very core of our being.

We are people who desperately need a Savior and as Christians that we continue to need the Savior and we continue to mission for the Savior because we can see things differently, because we see this kingdom and we see that.

See the gospel and Christianity is not an after dinner chat. It's not just a conversation about our religious proclivities. It's much, much more than that.

[25 : 29] It's much deeper than that. It mustn't just be sitting comfortably for an hour, hearing a discourse and moving away from that. It must be that our whole core of our being is affected by a Savior who has defeated sin in our hearts and has defeated the hopelessness and the despair of living without Him and just living for today.

I was thinking about just as I was walking to church today, I was thinking, you know, it really is, you take it maybe for granted when you're brought up in a Christian home and a Christian lifestyle, just living every day the same, apart from maybe on a Sunday you don't work, but you get Sunday papers instead.

Can you imagine just living for that all the time, that that's all you live for? And that's all your life is, just living for every day, getting up every day. And that's all that life is.

That's all for many people that life is. And that the whole big picture of life is just not there for them. And somehow we need to get that truth across that, you know, Christ has defeated the power of evil.

But I think within this we also see for our encouragement that when we trust in God, it's really pleasing to Him. Great verse there in verse 21 and 22, at the time full of joy through the Holy Spirit, Jesus said, I praise you Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you've hidden these things from the wise in learning and revealed them to little children.

[26 : 57] Yes, Father, for this is your good pleasure. Great, they are great verses. I love these verses because it reminds us that God is full of joy that we believe. You believe that Vicki believes that she will be baptized.

I know she's been a Christian for a long time, but that she has been baptized, that we've come to faith. God is pleased with that and it filled Jesus Christ with joy from the Holy Spirit.

The Trinity was involved in these words because it's really pleasing to God. We can't see that. We just look at the flesh and blood picture of these guys going out.

But we're told that spiritually they were fulfilling a great commission and that people were coming to faith and that pleases God. What we are doing and when people come to faith pleases God, he was full of joy.

What I really like about it is the way that people believe appeals to God so that God says there's lots of people who look in their lives and they think they're very wise and learned and they've worked out lots of things and they haven't come to faith because for whatever reason they've got in their own eyes, they've got all the wisdom and all the learning they need.

[28 : 08] And it somehow appeals to God that the underdog believes. It appeals to God that they're simple minded like me and you who aren't wise in their own eyes, who haven't stood before God and say, thanks for the cross but I've got a better way and I think I am wise and I'm learned and I'll do it without you.

God somehow appeals to God's nature that ordinary people with a childlike faith have had the secrets of the universe revealed and can see by faith what the world can't see.

And I hope that you can see that today. I hope you can see beyond the mere words on a page, a mere historical account of something that happened 2,000 years ago and think irrelevant, nothing for me.

And I hope that you're not in wise and learned in your own eyes where you say it's not mine but that you can see like an innocent child trusting in the Savior, that you can see yes.

And I know that God is pleased and it causes heaven to rejoice when sinners repent and are saved.

[29 : 30] So we remember that and we remember also which God Jesus says here that there is a plentiful spiritual harvest going right back to the beginning. Harvest is plentiful, the workers are few.

So can I encourage you with that as we finish? That's still the same principle and truth today. People will believe when we go out with the gospel, when we live as missional Christians, when we share the gospel.

I know it's easy to think not to look with the eyes of just this world and see people and say they'll never believe. My friends will never believe. I know what they think they'll not believe.

Look beyond that and say the harvest is plentiful. Listen to God who sends us out and when He sends us out He's going to give us a harvest. Many people, lots more baptisms.

That's what we're looking for and that's the encouragement and He wants us to remember that as we go out we are workers for Him. Rejoice today, not in any great things we'll be able to do for Him but rejoice that our names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life, our names are written in heaven.

[30 : 33] May that be the motive for us going out and we will have to work. We will. He commands us and He encourages us and He cooperates with us and He wants us.

He condescends to work with us. We will work. Let us work and persevere as Christians here in St. Columbus in this great task in our lives and be workers.

Remember if we're tempted as Christians to think missionary service and evangelism's for others who are holier and higher up the ladder than I am, there's no other way.

And when He says go, He says you're a Christian, you're a saint. You're sent to your workplace, to your company, to your family, to your surroundings and you're sent to live for Jesus Christ, to your friends, to your students, to your schoolmates, you're sent to serve the King.

There's no other way of one short life. And you have contact with people that no church, no minister, no Bible will ever get to.

[31 : 44] You have these contacts and there is a harvest and He wants you to work for Him, all of you, all of us to work. And then the invitation is to become workers for Christ, not because that will earn any favour with Him, not that it will merit anything from Him, but in gratitude as you've accepted salvation and a gift of salvation that you would become a worker, that you would look beyond this black and white picture or wording here and see the spiritual message for yourself.

What will it take for you to accept Jesus and enter into the Kingdom of God? Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

Amen. May God bless our thoughts on that passage together.