

Disciple Making Disciples

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[0:00] So our scripture reading tonight is from the New Testament, the Gospel of Luke, chapter 10, verses 1-16. And this is the word of the Lord.

After this, the Lord appointed 72 others and sent them on ahead of Him, two by two, into every town and place where He himself was about to go.

And He said to them, The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. Go your way. Behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.

Carry no money bag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, Peace be to this house. And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him.

But if not, it will return to you. And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide. For the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house.

[1:04] Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick in it and say to them, The kingdom of God has come near to you. But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off against you.

Nevertheless, know this, that the kingdom of God has come near. I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town. Woe to you, Chorazin!

Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more bearable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you.

And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades. The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me. And the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me.

This is God's holy word. So last week, David started us on a new series on discipleship. And we're in Luke, chapters 9 to 12.

[2:15] And in Luke, chapters 9, Jesus changes. Luke changes his tone, his direction. And he starts talking about Jesus making his way towards Jerusalem.

It's kind of like a travelogue of Jesus' journey. And along the way, Jesus teaches what it means to be a disciple. So what is a disciple? Well, we can think about a disciple as being a follower, somebody who follows after Jesus.

When Jesus was alive, when Jesus walked the earth, people did literally drop the tools that they were working with and followed after him. They walked after him.

We can also think about a disciple as a learner. So somebody who, in Jesus' day, wanted to learn from a great teacher would come and sit at their feet and would absorb their teaching, would listen, would try to emulate their life, trying to live their life the way that they did.

And today, as disciples, we metaphorically sit at Jesus' feet. Through the power of the Spirit and the power of the Word, we sit at Jesus' feet and we learn from him.

[3 : 22] Not in a physical way, but in no less real way. Well, in the passage that we read today, we're going to see that to be a disciple also means to be a messenger.

So Corey just read Jesus appointing 72 disciples. Others, they're called here, they're disciples. And he sends them out before him.

He calls them in and he sends them out. Tonight, I'd like to look through these 16 verses in three kind of parts, these sections.

So first of all, the way that Jesus sends them. And then the message that he wants them to deliver. And then just how serious, how important it is that they go.

So we can call it the sending, the saying, the seriousness, maybe. Okay, so first off, the sending. In the free church, we have a labor crisis. There are so many vacant congregations all over the country.

[4 : 27] And we need ministers to fill those pulpits. That's maybe why certain people have been accepted for candidacy in the free church.

Is my mic on? Yeah, that's better. And it's not just those empty pulpits that we have to fill, but the free church as a denomination wants to plant another 30 churches by 2030.

So we need guys to lead those works as well. And then at the other end, there's lots of guys who are ministers in the free church who are reaching retirement age. So we need a conveyor belt of ministers to come in and replace those people.

And when we talk about the need for ministers, we talk about it a lot at seminary. We talk about it in churches. One of the verses that we go to is verse 2 here. The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.

And therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. So Jesus knows our needs, and he knows that we need ministers, and he gives us a solution.

[5 : 28] What we're supposed to do, we're supposed to pray. We're to pray for that. So I guess the first question I want to ask tonight is, are you praying for more gospel workers, for more ministers to fill these pulpits that are vacant all over the country?

How fervently are we praying? Do we pray when we think about it? Or is it something that we're constantly thinking of? Because there's so many people in congregations all over Scotland that don't have people opening the Bible for them on a weekly basis, and not pasting congregations.

Those are difficult situations to be in. But secondly, if we were to think about this passage in isolation, not to think about what came before it or what comes after it, we could think, we could be mistaken for thinking that this passage is about the professionals.

God, please give us more full-time gospel workers. And that is a good prayer to pray. But here's the thing. Right before this chapter, the start of chapter 9, Jesus takes his 12 disciples, his closest confidants, the guys that he's been with the most, and he sends them out.

And then when he sends these 72 now, the words that he uses to send them, and what he tells them to do is incredibly similar in language to what he says to the 12. Our passage here doesn't say disciples.

[6 : 54] It says 72 others. But at one point in Jesus' life, his disciples and his family had thought that he had lost it.

And they went out to find him and to take him back and to save him from harm. And they couldn't get near him because the house was so full. And they gave message and said, we need to speak to Jesus.

And they said to Jesus, your disciples and your family are here. And he pointed to the people that are around him. And he said, these are my disciples. This is my family. So the role of disciple is not for a full-time employed person.

This is not a passage just about ministers. This is a passage about anyone who listens and obeys to Jesus. Because anyone who listens and obeys to Jesus is a disciple.

And part of being a disciple is being a messenger. There's a big harvest that needs to be brought in. Jesus is people out there who are to be brought into his kingdom.

[8 : 04] And you're the one who's to go and tell them. So Jesus sends out 72. Often in the Bible, we saw this morning, Corey was talking about numbers are significant.

And I think this 72 is significant here as well. And I think it relates to the book of Genesis. So after the flood, and of course the world was destroyed because of his wickedness, God saved Noah and his family.

And in Genesis chapter 10, we have the nations of the world that come from Noah's legacy, from his lineage. And they go out and they fill the earth.

And in the Greek version of the Old Testament, which was really in common use when the letter of the gospel of Luke was written, there's 72 nations.

So I think what we're saying here is the breaking news that Jesus has come, that the kingdom of God is breaking in, and we're being sent out into the world, the whole world, all the nations, to tell them.

[9 : 18] 72 people, 72 messengers representing 72 nations. but this is not just merely a sending out.

It's sending out with a message to go to all the nations of the world and to bring those nations, God's people in those nations, back to him.

Not the same as before, but as a new kind of kingdom people under the kingship of Jesus. This is the start, if you think about it like that, of a global mission trip.

And maybe when I say global mission trip, you think of fundraising and getting on a plane and going to Peru or to Africa. And those are great things to do and important things to do.

But we can't all go in for a mission. I don't think we're all supposed to. And Paul helps us see that, I think. He helps us to see that to be on mission, we don't have to raise funds or get on a plane.

[10 : 21] In fact, in Ephesians 2, Paul helps us understand that mission might be right on your doorstep. Because in verses 8, it says, for by grace you've been saved through faith.

And this is not your own doing, it's the gift of God. Not a result of works so that no one may boast. But then in verse 10, he says, for we are his workmanship, created in Christ for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

So if you're a disciple, you've been saved from something, from sin and from death, but you've also been saved to something, to good works that God has prepared for you.

God has made you new in Christ to do the very specific work that was prepared just for you to do.

If you think about it this way, there's people in Edinburgh whose names are on Jesus' list of disciples, disciples, and he's chosen me, and he's chosen you to go and tell them.

[11 : 34] He's made you free in Christ, born again, and so you're truly free to go into the city and to love people, and to love people, you tell them the thing that they need to know the very most.

So we see in verse 1 that Jesus sent his disciples to every place where he himself is about to go, and I think for us that means every place, everywhere, everywhere we go.

Jesus says, in your classroom, in your office, I need somebody right there in Edinburgh, just now, wherever you're employed, wherever you're studying, wherever you're working, I need somebody there to go and tell them about my peace, to tell them about my kingdom.

And Jesus is telling these 72, get out, go, don't hang a bahu. And he's saying the same thing to us. I wonder how that makes you feel, because it can be quite intimidating to think about going out into the city, even if it's people you know really well, and telling them that Jesus has come to save them from their sins.

Maybe you're a little bit nervous. Well, when we read on, you might become a big bit nervous, because in verse 4, Jesus tells us 72 that he's sending them out to be like lambs among wolves.

[13:03] Go and tell people about my kingdom. Oh, and by the way, it's not going to be easy. If you've gone out yourself, and you've shared about Jesus, you know that it's not easy.

You know that you will meet opposition. Maybe you've invited people to church, and they've just kind of quietly listened to you, and then ignored you.

And that can be hard to take. Maybe it's awkward now with those people. Maybe they live next door, or across the road. Or maybe you've spoken about Jesus to somebody in work, and they've just looked at you like you're naive, or like you're tied to some silly superstition that everybody else has moved beyond.

And this can be embarrassing for us. It's hard to share their faith. But Jesus doesn't ever promise us that it's going to be easy to be a disciple.

In fact, the New Testament is packed full of passages that tell us exactly the opposite. It tells us how hard it's going to be. But the interesting thing about lambs and wolves is that even although it's hard, we can't let the hardness of sharing the gospel make us hardened.

[14:21] It can't harden our hearts. We're to be lambs. You can never argue somebody into accepting Jesus. You can't fight anyone into turning away from their sin.

You can't trick anybody into God's kingdom. We're not naive. We're not to be naive, put ourselves in dangerous situations, but we're to tell people about Jesus as though we were lambs, gently leading them to the shepherd.

Look, if you find this daunting, and it is daunting, look at, with me, verse 16. It says, the one, this is Jesus talking, he says, the one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me.

Do you see what Jesus is saying here? This is extraordinary. He's saying, me and you, we're in this together. Don't be anxious about having the right words, just point them to me.

Don't be anxious about converting anybody. It's the power of the Spirit that's going to do that. Don't be anxious about being rejected. Look how they rejected me. Just go.

[15:39] So, Jesus tells the 72 to go, and to go with urgency. And he also tells them the message that they're there to deliver, the saying. He says to them, don't take any money with you, don't take your money bag, don't take a knapsack, don't take extra shoes, travel lightly, greet no one on the road, move swiftly, and rely on the new disciples that you meet to provide your food for you.

He says, don't go from house to house having a good time enjoying yourself. He's talking about the urgency and the importance of what it is that you're to do. This isn't a holiday, this is a mission trip.

And he tells them the message they're to deliver. So, in verse 5, he says, whatever house you enter, first say, peace be on this house. And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him.

But if not, it will return to you. This is going house to house is reminiscent to me of the Passover. So, in the Old Testament, ancient Israel, they put blood on the doorposts and the lintel of their houses so that when the destroyer would come, he would pass over those houses and they would have peace.

And here, when the disciples, the 72, go door to door meeting people, they say, peace to you. And if they receive that peace, then the house will share peace.

[17:15] But if not, if they don't recognize this peace, they don't want to know about Jesus' kingdom that's coming, then the house is not going to have peace because real peace can only be found in following after Jesus.

Jesus also tells the 72 to perform healings. So, this is physical healing making people better. But even this physical healing are signs that Jesus' kingdom is breaking into the world.

The brokenness that's in the world is beginning to be restored. God's kingdom is coming near to them. It's so tempting for us, I think, to default to the idea that people need good advice.

When we see people struggling, with people having a hard time, we think, I can help them. I know what they need to do. They need to find a new job. I know what they need to do. They need to stop doing that thing that I know is bad for them.

And maybe those things are true. Sometimes those things are good and helpful. But we shouldn't confuse the idea that people need good advice with the truth that people need to know the good news.

[18:30] They need to know that peace is available through Jesus. In Luke 4, Jesus tells us that that's why he's come. He's come to preach the kingdom.

And then in Luke 19, verse 11, says to the people, they supposed that the kingdom was going to appear immediately. So the 72 have been sent out and they're going door to door and they're telling people about Jesus' peace and they're saying the kingdom of God is drawn near.

And the people are expecting a big military or political turnover and everything to change dramatically overnight. But that's not what Luke records for us. That's not what happened.

For Luke, the kingdom of God is an end time reality, something that's going to happen one day at the end on Christ's return, but it's broken into the world now in his day when Jesus came into the world.

It's broken in, but it's still waiting for its final consummation. This is the already, but not yet. The kingdom is drawn near, but it's not yet fulfilled in its full state.

[19:42] But while the kingdom's come, hasn't come in its full form yet, God's promise, his promised reign is not just a future thing.

It's begun now in Jesus and it demands a response. There's two options. Receive it and have peace or reject it and don't.

Jesus tells them, shake off the dust of your feet. When you share the news of the peace of the coming kingdom with these people and they reject you, shake off the dust of your feet.

And this is a symbol, this is an outward sign for the people of the New Testament that when they went outside the Holy Land, the land that God had given them, they were to come back and that land was precious and good and set apart for them but to shake off anything that doesn't belong to it.

There's an outward sign that the kingdom has come near and these people who are rejecting their message are not going to be welcomed in. Okay, finally, the seriousness.

[20 : 59] So you notice in verse 1 that the disciples are sent out two by two. There's 72 of them and they're sent out in twos. And there's shared power, there's power in shared ministry and the fact that we can support one another, we can pray for one another, we can provide provisions for one another, there's safety in numbers, these are all good things.

But I think that being sent in twos also is to remind us of another Old Testament book, this time the book of Deuteronomy because in Deuteronomy 19.15 it tells us that if somebody's convicted of breaking the law, they can only be charged on the testimony of two witnesses.

So you need two people to witness a crime in order to make a charge. And that legal language is really fitting because of what Jesus is just about to say when he comes to the second half of our passage.

Because he's going to pivot from telling us to go and share the message, that true peace is available through faith in him, to laying out the consequences for the people who refuse to believe the message.

I had a friend who studied theology at university and she used to tell me that the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament are really different gods because the God of the Old Testament is angry and violent and the God of the Good Testament is just loving and kind.

[22 : 24] But here, Jesus literally becomes a fire and brimstone preacher because the consequences of not receiving God's peace, not entertaining Jesus' kingdom are catastrophic.

Jesus says it will be more bearable for Sodom, which was wiped off the map with fire and sulfur from heaven. that it will be for the day of judgment for the people who don't turn to Jesus.

Last week, Jesus, last week, David, that's a Freudian slip, preached on chapter 9 and James and John, when people rejected Jesus, James and John, his disciples said, well, can we call down fire from heaven and just blast them?

And Jesus says, no, of course not. He rebukes them because this isn't the time for judgment. Jesus is saying, this is a time for salvation. But the time of judgment is coming.

Jesus has come and he's inaugurated the kingdom. He's come as a savior and he is our savior. But Jesus is going to return in power and in glory and he's going to judge the whole world.

[23 : 37] And for those outside of Jesus' kingdom, he'll be more bearable to be rained on with fire and sulfur than to face God's wrath.

Jesus said, if Tyre and Sidon had seen this, they would have repented of their sins. Those were port cities, gateways to the Gentiles.

But these towns, these blessed towns that have seen Jesus perform miracles in them, they've remained hard-hearted. These amazing works of healing, casting out evil, they've been done in places like Horizon and Capernaum.

They're indicators of what the fully inaugurated kingdom is going to be like. No pain, no illness, no evil, only good, only peace.

Only peace with Jesus. But confronting people about the consequences of their decision not to come to Jesus is difficult.

[24 : 51] It's terrifying in some ways. We're often told that it's okay to be a believer, it's okay to be a Christian, it's okay to do whatever you want with your life, but keep it to yourself.

As long as you're not going out and trying to convince people that what they're doing is wrong, then okay, knock yourself out, do whatever you want on a Sunday. But to not share the gospel with people is not an option for disciples.

I don't really know much about the magician's pen and teller, but I do know that Penn is an atheist and he was interviewed one time and he said, he was asked about Christians sharing their faith and he said, if you believe that there's a heaven and a hell and you think it's not worth telling somebody about it, how much do you have to hate him not to tell?

Even famous atheists see that the truth of Jesus transforms everything. If Jesus really is who he says he is, then not telling people about him, not telling people about the situation they found themselves in when they're separated from him is wicked.

It's the most unloving thing you could possibly do to keep it to yourself. We have to be constantly on mission, constantly sharing the gospel, not just in one and off occasions over and over again because people who don't know the truth are facing eternal separation from God.

[26 : 58] This is urgent. It makes me think about an American soldier called Desmond Doss and he fought in World War II during the Battle of Okinawa and he was classified as a conscientious objector because he wouldn't carry a gun.

He wanted to fight for God and country but he wouldn't take another human life and so his fellow soldiers didn't like him much. There was a battle that wasn't going well and a number of men had gone up the ridge and he was a medic and you might think that because he was a medic he probably had a red cross on his shoulder he'd be safer but actually he says in his book that he wrote later he says that they knew that shooting medics killing medics destroyed the morale of the whole platoon and so if you were a medic if you weren't fighting you actually became a more prized target for the enemy soldiers.

In the Battle of Hacksaw Ridge the whole platoon was told to retreat to come back home but Doss refused to leave and he went up and down that ridge over and over again dragging injured men from the battlefield.

Extraordinary bravery because he knew how dangerous it was. He knew that he was a prized target for the enemy. Every time he got a man down safely he didn't stop but he prayed and do you know what his prayer was?

Not God keep me safe if I go again or God please let this man survive. It was please God help me get one more.

[28 : 53] Help me get one more. There's men and women all over Edinburgh tonight facing certain death separation from God forever.

Jesus is on a rescue mission. He's saving people from death to life and if you're a believer tonight he's commanding you to enlist in that journey in that mission.

How would our lives change? How much would they change at work or in the park with the kids or at a restaurant or in class or wherever we are if our prayer for our own lives would be Lord one more help me get your gospel to one more person.

Not that we can save anybody it's the Holy Spirit that can change people's hearts but if we love our neighbours if we love all the people round about us we've got a responsibility to tell them about the danger that they're in.

If you're not a Christian tonight if you're here and you're wrestling with the claims that the Bible makes and you're thinking that I've only been speaking to disciples to believers tonight well you can know right now that the peace of Jesus is on offer to you right now.

[30 : 14] Will you follow him? Will you learn from him? Will you be his disciple? Jesus has gone to extraordinary lengths to give us his peace.

Jesus. He wasn't just a great teacher. He wasn't just a great example. We were to be like lambs among wolves but Jesus was the ultimate lamb.

He was the sacrificial lamb who went willingly to give his life to satisfy the consequences of our sin. He went up the ridge up the hill to save his people not carrying a medical pack but carrying a cross walking straight into the firing zone.

He paid the price for our sin. He gave his life so that we can have new life in him. That's the message that we have to share.

Jesus came to suffer and to die but he rose again and he's reigning now in heaven. He's coming back and he's going to bring all his people from his harvest from all across the world who will accept his peace.

[31 : 36] Amen. Let's pray. Lord God, we thank you for your word. We ask that you would help us to lay it to heart. Lord, we feel challenged when we think about going out into the world and sharing the news that Jesus has come, what it means.

We feel challenged by different groups of people in our lives who we feel that we can't share the gospel with. But Lord, help us to be bold, help us to be clear.

And Lord, we ask that you would give us opportunities to proclaim the gospel in every aspect of our lives, in school, in work, in college, in uni, wherever we are. Lord, we pray that you would use us to your glory.

We ask all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.