

This morning, we are in the 18th week of a sermon series that I have entitled “Meeting Jesus.” I have been making my way this year through Luke’s account of the life of Jesus, looking at various interactions that people had with Jesus, in order to better understand what it means to know and follow Him. This morning, we will be in Luke 10:1-24, looking at a mission that Jesus sends 72 of his disciples on.

Luke 10:1–24 - After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. ² He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. ³ Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. ⁴ Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road. ⁵ “When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ ⁶ If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you. ⁷ Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house. ⁸ “When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you. ⁹ Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ ¹⁰ But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, ¹¹ ‘Even the dust of your town we wipe from our feet as a warning to you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God has come near.’ ¹² I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town. ¹³ “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. ¹⁴ But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. ¹⁵ And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to the heavens? No, you will go down to Hades. ¹⁶ “Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me; but whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me.” ¹⁷ The seventy-two returned with joy and said, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.” ¹⁸ He replied, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. ¹⁹ I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. ²⁰ However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” ²¹ At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do. ²² “All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” ²³ Then he turned to his disciples and said privately, “Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. ²⁴ For I

tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.”

Let me summarize and apply this passage to our lives in four points:

1) The world is a harvest field

Luke 10:1–2 - After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. ² He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.

The passage begins with Jesus sending 72 of his disciples out two-by-two into the towns where he is about to go. While the 12 male apostles get most of the attention in the gospels, this passage shows us that Jesus had many more disciples, including men and women, and for this assignment, he chooses 72 of them to send out. Luke 8 is one passage that tells us that Jesus’ disciples included women:

Luke 8:1–3 - After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, ² and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; ³ Joanna the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod’s household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.

And as he sends them, he compares the towns to which they are heading to harvest fields, and tells his disciples to pray for the Lord of the harvest to send out more workers into the harvest field. For those unfamiliar with the analogy, in the agricultural calendar of Israel, their lives were shaped by annual seasons of sowing seed, waiting for the crops to grow, times of early and late rains, drought and finally harvest where the crops would be picked. Throughout the Bible, the harvest time is often used as an analogy of the final judgment, when the righteous and wicked would be separated like wheat from the weeds. Jesus seems to be communicating that there are people ready to be saved from judgment, but there are not enough people willing to go out and put in the work to share the good news with them and save them from that final judgment, and so we need to pray to God to send out more workers. We also see this theme in John’s gospel:

John 4:35–38 – “Don’t you have a saying, ‘It’s still four months until harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. ³⁶ Even

now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. ³⁷ Thus the saying ‘One sows and another reaps’ is true. ³⁸ I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor.”

And in Revelation, the final book, we see the harvest as a metaphor for Judgment Day:

Revelation 14:14–16 - I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one like a son of man with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. ¹⁵ Then another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the cloud, “Take your sickle and reap, because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.” ¹⁶ So he who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested.

And in Matthew:

Matthew 13:24–30 - Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶ When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. ²⁷ “The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’ ²⁸ ““An enemy did this,’ he replied. “The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’ ²⁹ ““No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’”

The world is like a harvest field, and one day it will be time to reap and to separate the wheat from the weeds. And so, Jesus sends out his disciples to gather in the people before judgment comes, before the final harvest, before it is too late to be saved.

2) **We are Jesus’ heralds and ambassadors**

Luke 10:3-9 - Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. ⁴ Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road. ⁵ “When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ ⁶ If someone who promotes peace is there,

your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you. ⁷ Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around **from house to house**. ⁸ “When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you. ⁹ Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’

Jesus sends them out without much and warns against distraction, so that they might trust God and focus on their mission. He tells them to let people know that the kingdom of God has come near them, and to heal their sick, and to proclaim God’s peace upon those who receive them. **Remember that they are being sent out to prepare the way for the coming of Jesus. Jesus is the King of Kings, and where He is, there is God’s kingdom.** And so, they have come to proclaim that the long-awaited King, the Messiah, is coming, and to demonstrate that by healing people in the power of God. **And Jesus tells them that it will be dangerous.** They are going out like lambs among wolves. But God will be with them.

As followers of Jesus, we are also sent by God, part of His mission. **We are to be heralds. Heralds faithfully deliver the king’s message. They are not allowed to change the message.** That is what I am, and what we are – heralds of the king’s message, faithful proclaimers of the gospel.

Jude 3 - Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God’s holy people.

This message that we are preaching should be largely unchanged from the gospel that was proclaimed by the first apostles. **That is why I am mainly trying to preach what the Bible says, and not just clever stories or Eric’s thoughts.** Because I am a herald, called by God to faithfully deliver the king’s message. And what is the main message, the gospel?

1 Corinthians 15:1–8 - Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. ² By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. ³ For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, **and then to the Twelve**. ⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James,

then to all the apostles,⁸ and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

Gospel was a common word in the Roman Empire, signifying news of an objective, history changing event that everyone needed to reply to. Like the Gospel of Caesar Augustus. **We are heralds of the gospel, and we are ambassadors**, sent by God as an official representative to speak and act on his behalf in a foreign place.

2 Corinthians 5:17–21 - Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us **the message of reconciliation**.²⁰ We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.²¹ God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

If all that matters is your own relationship with God, then He would take you up to heaven when you came to faith. But you are still here, because you have been enlisted into God's mission to redeem this world, to restore the world, to bring people back to Him. Just like the 72, we have been sent out as heralds, as ambassadors.

Matthew 28:18–20 - Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Go and make disciples.

Acts 1:8 – "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Be my witnesses. And this is the message:

Luke 24:46–48 - He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day,⁴⁷ and repentance for the forgiveness of

sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things.

Repent from sin and trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins. If you believe, then you are on mission, wherever you are, sent by God.

Romans 10:13–15 - “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” ¹⁴ How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ¹⁵ And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

3) **Some will receive and some will reject the gospel message, with eternal consequences**

Luke 10:10-16 - But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, ¹¹ ‘Even the dust of your town we wipe from our feet as a warning to you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God has come near.’ ¹² I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town. ¹³ “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in **sackcloth and ashes**. ¹⁴ But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. ¹⁵ And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to the heavens? No, you will go down to Hades. ¹⁶ “Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me; but whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me.”

I say this often, but when you read passages like this, where Jesus is claiming that people’s eternal destinies depend upon how they respond to him, you quickly see that he is either a lunatic, a deceiver, or the actual Lord of the Harvest, the judge of all the earth. But there is no getting around this hard truth, that Jesus does not preach an “all paths lead to God” message, but instead preaches a binary message that some will believe and follow Him and have eternal life, while others will reject Him and experience eternal punishment. Jesus tells them to shake the dust off their feet as a sign of judgment. Their sin will be worse because the revelation was greater and they still rejected it.

John 3:16–18 - For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through

him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

John 3:36 - Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them.

John 14:6 - Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

John 11:25–26 - Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; ²⁶ and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

This is a difficult truth for people to hear, but if you believe Jesus is a good teacher, then you need to actually listen to what He teaches. Part of what He clearly teaches is that He alone is the way to God and to eternal life, and that the most important decision you can make is to believe in Him. **This is because the question is not being a good person, but having the sins that have separated you from a holy God forgiven.**

Romans 3:20–24 - Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.

²¹ But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. ²² This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 2:8–9 - For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.

There are plenty of people out there who would argue that you should just live and let live and not try to convert others. But if Jesus' words are true? Then it would be like keeping the cure for cancer to your family. And do not miss that just as I am trying to convert you to my understanding of God and spiritual things, you are doing the same when you tell me to stop sharing the gospel and to let everyone believe whatever they want to believe.

This concept reminded me of a powerful video by Penn Jillette of the Las Vegas illusionist duo Penn & Teller. Penn Jillette is a very smart, outspoken atheist, and it is not hard to find videos online of him ridiculing religious people for their beliefs and practices. In one video, however, he spoke briefly of an encounter he had with a gentleman after one of his shows. Let me share some of what he said:

He walked over to me and he said, “I was here at the show last night, I saw the show and I liked it.” He was complimentary about my use of language and my honesty... he said nice stuff... and then he said “I brought this for you” and he gave me a pocket Gideon’s Bible with the New Testament and Psalms... he said “I wrote in the front of this, and I wanted you to have it... I’m proselytizing... I want you to know I’m a businessman, I’m sane, I’m not crazy.” And he looked me right in the eye, and it was really wonderful. I believe he knew that I was an atheist. But he was not defensive, and he looked me right in the eyes. And he was truly complimentary. It didn’t seem in any way that it was empty flattery; he was kind, and nice, and sane, and looked me in the eye and talked to me, and then gave me this Bible. **And I’ve always said, I don’t respect people who don’t proselytize. If you believe there is a heaven and hell and people could be going to hell or not getting eternal life or whatever and you think “well, it’s not really worth telling them this because it would make it socially awkward.” How much do you have to hate somebody to not proselytize? How much do you have to hate someone to believe that everlasting life is possible and not tell them that?** If I believe that there is a truck bearing down on you, and you didn’t believe it, there’s a certain point at which I tackle you. And this is more important than that. This guy was a really good guy. He was polite and honest and sane and he cared enough about me to proselytize and give me a Bible which had written in it a little note to me and five phone numbers and an email address in case I want to get in touch. Now, I know there is no God, and one polite person living his life right doesn’t change that. But I’ll tell you, he was a very, very, very good man, and that’s really important, and with that kind of goodness, it’s okay to have that deep of a disagreement. I still think religion does a lot of bad stuff, but that was a very good man.”

What would it look like to have this kind of compassion, this sense of urgency, in a way that outweighs your discomfort or fear? Who do you need to share the gospel with?

4) There is great joy in leading people to Christ, but even greater joy in being known by God

Luke 10:17-24 - The seventy-two returned with joy and said, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.”¹⁸ He replied, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.¹⁹ I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.²⁰ However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”²¹ At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and **revealed them to little children**. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.²² “All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”²³ Then he turned to his disciples and said privately, “Blessed are the eyes that see what you see.²⁴ For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.”

There is great joy in being a part of God’s mission. To see God use you to bring people to faith in Him, to see people come to know Jesus and to know that they have eternal life, is better than anything, for it has eternal consequences. Jesus even proclaims that he saw Satan defeated as the kingdom of God spread. But as Jesus says, the greatest thing to rejoice in is our salvation. **Our names are written in heaven is a reference to the town census**, the roll of the citizens of a particular town. Jesus uses this analogy to proclaim that when we come to faith in Him, we are citizens of heaven. We have assurance of eternal life already.

John 5:24 - “Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.”

Ephesians 1:13–14 - And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.

John 10:27–28 - My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.
²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand.

There is no greater joy than knowing God and being known by Him. But God invites us to share in His love and compassion for the people of this world who are lost and do not even know that they are lost, who are blind and do not even know that they are blind, so that we might go and share the gospel with them.

Matthew 9:35–38 - Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. ³⁸ Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

We need more workers! Pray for God to send out more? Be an answer to those prayers! Ask God to stir up in you a Christlike compassion for the lost!

2 Corinthians 5:17–21 - Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! ¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us **the message of reconciliation**. ²⁰ We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. ²¹ God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

If you know the Lord, may you answer the call like Isaiah did: “Here am I, send me!” And if you don’t know the Lord, pray this prayer of salvation with me:

Jesus, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God. I believe that in you is found eternal life, life to the full. I believe that apart from faith in you, I will die in my sins, separated from God for all eternity. But I believe that you love me so much that you died on the cross in my place, taking the penalty for my sin, and that you rose from the grave, conquering death. I turn from my sinful, self-centered way of life and I believe in you as my Savior and Lord. Amen.