

LUKE

“Why the Mission Must Multiply”

Luke 10:1-16

Sunday, July 1, 2018

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10 After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go. ² 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. ³ Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. ⁴ Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road. ⁵ Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace be to this house!’ ⁶ And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. ⁷ 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. ⁸ Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. ⁹ Heal the sick in it and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ ¹⁰ But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, ¹¹ ‘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.’ 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 mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. ¹⁴ But it will be more bearable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. ¹⁵ And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades.

¹⁶ “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.” ¹

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of your gospel word. By your Spirit, your word has the power to save us, to sanctify us, and send us to accomplish your will. Today, may your Spirit give us eyes to behold Jesus your son, as we look into your word. We pray this in his mighty name, AMEN.

Introduction

My oldest son Solomon loves school, and last year in kindergarten he began to fall in love with math. After I came home from work, he and I would give each other pop quizzes, with simple addition and subtraction equations. However, if given the choice, he prefers addition. He likes it when numbers get bigger. So I remember the day he asked me what seven plus seven was, and I said fourteen. But I responded by switching it up. I asked him, to tell me seven *times* seven was. He said fourteen. I said, no, it’s forty-nine. And that blew him away. He was like, “teach me this strange magic!”

And for all of you who have been to grade school well know, there is a very real distinction between mere addition and multiplication. When you add a number to another number, your first number will get bigger, but only by a little bit. But, in general, when you multiply a number by a number by a number (with the exceptions of one, zero, and negative numbers), your first number grows exponentially.

¹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Lk 10:1–16.

Our text before us today shows us that the kingdom God is designed to grow – not by addition – but by multiplication.

Jesus is making his final journey to the city of Jerusalem. As he makes this southward journey, action and anticipation are building. Just one chapter ago in the beginning of chapter nine of Luke, Jesus gave authority to his twelve apostles to heal diseases, cast out demons, and proclaim the kingdom of God (cf. Lk. 9:1-2). Jesus has come on a mission, but now he is calling his people to participate in that mission with him.

Now, only one chapter later, Jesus is multiplying this mission beyond the twelve apostles, and he appoints or commissions (ἐναδείκνυμι)² seventy-two³ more of his followers to declare the kingdom of God as well. And, in fact, many of the instructions that Jesus gives to the twelve he now gives to the seventy-two. He sends them two by two with little provision (Mk. 6:7), reminding them that Christians must be bound in community with one another and utterly dependent upon God in order to be a part of God's mission. The instructions regarding the mission of the seventy-two also highlight a heightened urgency sense of holiness surrounding the task.⁴

*But the big idea is this: the call to participate in the mission of God is not confined to the twelve apostles. Rather, the mission of God is for all of God's people, of all nations, and of all ages of history.*⁵

The mission must multiply.

So for the rest of our time today, I would like to look at three reasons from the text as to why the mission of God must multiply through the followers of Jesus.

Exposition

1.) The harvest is plentiful.

- As Jesus commissions the seventy-two for their mission to go and announce the arrival of Jesus, he begins with these words: “The harvest is plentiful.”
- In this sense, the harvest is not a reference to agriculture, but rather the spiritual condition of human hearts. For there to be a harvest, that means that already seeds have been sown into the ground. Already those seed have been nourished and watered. Already life has begun to spring up and bear fruit. This means that even though the seventy-two has only just begun their mission, God has already been moving out in front of them.
- “The harvest is plentiful” is not a conditional statement. It is a declarative sentence that is describing the nature of reality. There is nowhere we can go for the sake of the mission of God that God has not already gone out ahead of us. This truth is meant to encourage and embolden anyone who would rise to the occasion to participate in the mission of God. It was certainly a

² “to assign to a task or position, *appoint, commission*” William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 62.

³ For an extended discussion on the textual variants regarding the number of missionaries, see I. Howard Marshall, [*The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*](#), New International Greek Testament Commentary (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978), 414–415.

⁴ “The Talmud enjoins that no one is to go on the Temple Mount with staff, shoes, scrip, or money tied to him in his purse. Christ's messengers are to go out in the same spirit as they would go to the services of the temple, avoiding all distractions.” Alfred Plummer, [*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to S. Luke*](#), International Critical Commentary (London: T&T Clark International, 1896), 273.

⁵ “Scholars agree that the number seventy or (seventy-two) is, among other things, a reference to the seventy Gentile nations of the world listed in Genesis 10. Thus they were pioneers, precursors, taking the good news to the larger world.” R. Kent Hughes, [*Luke: That You May Know the Truth*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 376.

truth that encouraged and emboldened the apostle Paul.

- The book of Acts tells us how after violent rejection at Thessalonica and half-hearted indifference at Athens, the famous Paul is frustrated and discouraged as he begins to experience resistance at Corinth. It is in that context the Lord speaks to Paul: *“And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, “Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.” And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them”* (Acts 18:9–11, ESV).
- God is telling Paul. I have many people here. They just don’t know they are my people yet. Preach my gospel. Announce the good news of Jesus. Right now they are bound by sin, but I have appointed you to give them the message that will set them free! Right now they are in darkness, but I have sent you to shine light!
- We need to think of our city this way. The harvest in Amarillo, Texas is plentiful.
- Tens of thousands of people not going to church. But I believe of those tens of thousands of people; there are many who are God’s people – they just don’t know it yet.
- We have two options: we can embrace our call to go into the harvest, or we can ignore it.
- We can build a church that would be the conglomeration of all of the individual preferences of the people who are already in this room, or we can build a church designed to reach those who are not in this room. We can be a church who will wait for our city to come to us, or we can be a church who will go into our city.
- I want us to build a church for the people who are not yet here. The harvest in Amarillo is plentiful.

2.) The laborers are few.

- About fifteen years ago, I was a volunteer leader for a massive youth ministry. The youth ministry grew into the hundreds, and its name was recognized across the city. And it was a catastrophic failure.
- We grew a crowd, but quickly lost control of the culture.
- APD had to inform us that our Wednesday night meetings had become the number one location where drugs were sold by and to students.
- Christian parents started not allow their kids to attend because it was a bad influence.
- It seemed like despite our best efforts to create power worship service and a engaging message; kids were learning more about sin than salvation.
- In short, this youth ministry was a triumph of marketing and a disaster of discipleship.
- There is a very real difference between growing a congregation versus growing disciples.
- Anyone can come to a meeting, but it takes more to become a disciple – a follower – of Jesus.
- The church must be about disciples. And marketing and gimmicks cannot make disciples. Only disciples can make more disciples.
- This is why we love to go deep in the word of God in our sermons. We want to teach you how to understand and read the word of God yourself!
- This is why we want to pull people into community. We want to share life together.
- This is why we want to compel people to get involved, to serve, to go on mission trips, and to be engaged in our city.
- Christ. Community. Culture.
- Encounter Christ: the truth of God. Engage in Community: the people of God. And embody the culture of the Kingdom by participating in the mission of God. This is a vision not for our

organization, but for you the people!

- There is a command here: pray God would send workers into his harvest.
- Prayed with 12 senior pastors from every corner of this city.
- We prayed for you!
- And be the answer to that prayer.
- Ask about their story, tell your story, tell God's story.
- Much of the churches mission exists outside of these walls in places I will never see, but that you have access to on a daily basis.

- Before we even step out of the walls of this church, there are several opportunities to be a laborer of the harvest right here.
- We need parents to step up and disciple your kids.
- We need older men who want to pour into young men; older women who want to pour into younger women.
- We need older couples willing to disciple young couples.
- We need singles of all ages willing to pour themselves out for the sake of the gospel.
- What you get versus what you give.

- If your goal is happiness, you will never be happy.
- You will never have enough money that will make you feel safe enough. You will never take a vacation that will make you feel rested enough. You will never have an ideal situation when your task list is completed enough so that you can give your life to things of God.
- But if you goal is to do something eternally meaningful, to sacrifice, bear responsibility, and suffer for something beyond yourself, you will find something greater than temporary pleasure. You will find the abiding joy of God.
- ***"For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it" (Luke 9:24, ESV).***

3.) The stakes are high.

The latter part of the passage we are confronted with biblical images of judgment.

We see a reference to Sodom, which was a city in the Old Testament that was destroyed because of its sin. We see a reference to "that day," which is a reference to the Day of Judgment at the end of history. And we see a reference to "hades," which refers Greek translation of the Old Testament word "Sheol." It is the place of death and the unrighteous dead. It is the reality of hell.⁶

Now, I have to admit. The doctrine of hell is an uncomfortable and unsettling doctrine. It is one of the parts of scripture that our culture, in particular, finds the most offensive. Maybe you grew up in a church or experienced a church where hell, fire, and brimstone sermons were overemphasized and even abused. But the doctrine of eternal judgment is, nevertheless, a part of God's revealed Scripture. It is something the Bible teaches, so we need to understand it rightly.

In fact, in my experience as a Christian, the truths that are initially the most confusing and most unsettling are the very truths that have the most capacity to set us free.

⁶ "Go down to the depths. Literally *go down to Hades*. "Hades" is the Greek term used to translate *Sheol* in the LXX. ...the opposite of heaven (Ps 139:8; Amos 9:2), or the place of the unrighteous dead (1 Enoch 22:3-13; 63:10; 99:11; 2 Esdr 7:36). It is used in the latter sense in Luke 16:22-26 and probably should be understood in the same way here." Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, vol. 24, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 307.

So what is hell?

The New Testament describes hell as the place where the worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched (Mk. 9:48), a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mt. 13:50), a place of everlasting destruction cut off from the presence of the Lord (2 Thes. 1:9), it is described as the second death (Rev. 21:8), a place where the smoke of torment goes up forever and ever (Rev. 14:11).

To be in hell is to be utterly cut off from God who is the fountain of all goodness and beauty and joy. It is the utter loss of our capacity give or receive love. “It is the trajectory of a soul self-absorbed, self-centered, going on forever and ever.”

Now, I will admit, there is a lot we don’t know about hell, regarding specifics. But what we do know is this: Hell is terrible, and hell is real, and hell is all that is left when we reject God. As C.S. Lewis once said, “In each of us there is something growing, which will be hell unless it is nipped in the bud.”

So sure the doctrine of hell can be abused. But today, many Christians don’t take this seriously at all – much of American society (including Christians) functionally live like this life is all that matters. We don’t care about what happens to us or others in eternity, and we don’t care that much about earth after we are gone. And the doctrine of judgment is designed to be a type of smelling salt that awakens us from this stupor.

Now, I don’t people become a Christians because a preacher holds the loaded gun of hell to their head. People become Christians because they see the beauty of Christ. The truth of eternal judgment is not the greatest motivation or only motivation to become a Christian, but it is a biblical motivation.

For Christians, this truth should give us a sense of urgency and haste toward evangelism and personal holiness. This is our one and only life. Eternity is on the line. It is not a time to be distracted.

But how do we keep our focus? The author of Hebrews answers that question.

“...let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”
(Hebrews 12:1-2, ESV)

The doctrine of hell is a weighty doctrine. But I believe even more weighty is the reality of the love of Christ. It is not accidental that Christ teaches this truth of eternal judgment, as he himself is on the way to Jerusalem. And it is in Jerusalem where Jesus will be nailed to a cross and endure the death and judgment we deserve, so all who believe in him might receive the life and acceptance he deserves.

This is good news that must be heralded. The harvest is plenty. The laborers are few The stakes are high. The mission must multiply.

Community Group Discussion Starters

- 1. Summarize this week’s text: Luke 10:1-16. In your own words describe what is happening in this story.*
- 2. In Luke 10:2 Jesus declares, “The harvest is plentiful.” How should this statement encourage and embolden us to share our faith with people in our lives?*

3. *In Luke 10:2, Jesus makes a command “pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” What ways may the Lord be calling you to be a laborer for his harvest?*
4. *Luke 10:10-16 addresses the judgment that awaits those who reject the gospel. The doctrine of eternal judgment may seem harsh in today’s world, but it is a reality taught in the Bible. How should the truth of eternal judgment motivate Christians toward a sense of urgency in sharing our faith?*
5. *Spend some time this week praying for evangelism in our community.*

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