

November 5th, 2023 – (full sermon notes)
“**Seventy Sent Out: Part One**”
Luke 10:1-16

Last week, in **Luke 9:57-62**, we studied about three “tentative” disciples of Christ, who said they would follow Him, but it appears that none of them did.

Today we’ll begin our study about 70 true believers of Christ, who were sent out ahead of Jesus, in pairs, to prepare the towns and villages for His coming.

Read Luke 10:1... Unlike the three men in last week’s text, who didn’t count the cost of following Christ, those in today’s reading were true disciples, willing to trust God alone for their needs, as they take the gospel message to the lost.

Jesus’ concentrated ministry in Galilee is over and He is now heading toward Jerusalem, where He will be put to death, buried, rise from the grave, appear to His followers, and then ascend back into heaven to be with the Father.

Jesus has *appointed* [cf. **Acts 1:24**, “chosen,” personally selected] these seventy messengers to prepare the way ahead of Him and the Twelve, much like John the Baptizer, at the very beginning of Jesus’ ministry (**John 1:23**), “I am a voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ as Isaiah (**40:3**) the prophet said.”

Luke 10 is the only account of Jesus sending a specific 70 (or 72) disciples out. The discrepancy in number is because approximately half of the ancient scrolls used in translation record 70, the others 72. Scholars do not agree on whether the number should be 70 or 72, but it is interesting that the number 70 (not 72) is repeated other places in Scripture [70 elders: **Exodus 24:1, 9; Numbers 11:16**; 70 years: **Jeremiah 25:12; 29:10; 2Chronicles 36:21**].

Numbers 11:16, “The Lord therefore said to Moses, ‘Gather for Me seventy men from the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and their officers and bring them to the tent of meeting, and let them take their stand there with you.’”

Seventy men take their stand with Moses (70+1= 71 men). In the theocracy of Israel, the Sanhedrin was the supreme ruling court of ancient Israel, it was made up of 70 men and the high priest (71 men). Coincidence, I don’t think so.

So, was 70 (or 72) who were sent out to preach the gospel and heal the sick, it is most likely 70, and the number 72 was an error made by an early scribe, whose subsequent copies contained the number 72.

In today’s text, Jesus selected and sent out seventy men, in pairs. But why did He send them out in pairs? I’m glad you asked. Jesus had done this before (**Mark 6:7**), “He summoned the twelve and began to send them out in pairs, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits.”

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Solomon speaks to the wisdom of “two being better than one” (**Ecclesiastes 4:9-11**), “Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up. Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm *alone*?”

But there is yet another reason, more important (**Deuteronomy 19:15**), “On the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed.”

The 70 men (**Luke 10**, in pairs) are going into villages to give testimony about Jesus Christ, God’s Son, Lord and Savior; therefore it is important that their testimony conforms to the requirements of the Law, as written in the Prophets.

Read Luke 10:2b... Here we find another phrase that needs some explanation in order to fully understand its meaning, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.” That phrase is often interpreted as if it means there are many who are coming to Christ, and so few going out to find them. That however, is not the teaching here, as can be seen by comparing other texts; but first, consider the deep compassion Jesus had for the lost and unbelieving.

Matthew 9:13, “But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire compassion, and not sacrifice, ‘for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.” **36-37**, “Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.’”

Luke 13:34, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *the city* that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen *gathers* her brood under her wings, and you would not *have it!*”

Luke 19:41, “When [Jesus] approached [*unbelieving Jerusalem*], He saw the city and wept over it.”

Jesus had compassion on humanity, for He knows the fate of all who reject Him (**John 16:8-9**), “When He [Holy Spirit] comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me,” (**Matthew 7:19-21**), “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord, ‘will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven *will enter*,” (**John 6:40**), “For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day,” (**Matthew 25:41**), “Then He [Jesus] will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels,” (**Revelation 20:10**), “the lake of fire and brimstone... and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”

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Think about that phrase again, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.” Is there a bounty of people in the US coming to Christ? Are people flocking to Jesus as their Shepherd-Savior? I don’t think so, in fact, most of humanity continues to reject salvation through Christ.

The Bible is clear that those who reject God’s Son will receive God’s divine judgement for their sin, and they will spend eternity in hell. The only ones who get a pass on eternal condemnation, are those who believe in and receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (**Romans 3:10-12, 23-24; 5:8; 6:23; 8:1; 10:9-10, 13, 17**).

When Jesus says (**Luke 10:2b**), “The harvest is plentiful,” He is talking about the people who will be taken away in judgement, unless they come to Christ by faith. **Joel 3:12-13**, “I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations. Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, tread, for the wine press is full; the vats overflow, for their wickedness is great.”

Matthew 13:24-30, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away. But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ And he said to them, ‘An enemy has done this!’ The slaves said to him, ‘Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?’ But he said, ‘No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, ‘First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.’” **36-43**, “Then He left the crowds and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him and said, ‘Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.’ And He said, ‘The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, and the field is the world; and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one; and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels. So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.’”

See Matthew 24:36-39... The people at the time of Noah paid no attention to Noah’s warning; they just went about each day like the day before, as if nothing different was going to happen - then judgement came, the flood (**v. 39**), “took them all away” (cf. **Genesis 6:11-13, 17; 7:1**).

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See Matthew 24:40-41... The man and the woman who are taken, are taken in judgment; the man and the woman who are left, belong to God.

We should be living everyday for Christ, who has granted us forgiveness and eternal life. At any moment He could return, and what should He find us doing at His return? We ought to be proclaiming salvation through Christ, while also warning unbelievers about God’s coming judgement. We are to be living in a manner that expresses our trust in and obedience to Jesus Christ, as we seek to warn unbelievers about God’s coming judgment.

Revelation 14:14-19, “Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand. And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, ‘Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe.’ Then He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped. And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle. Then another angel, the one who has power over fire, came out from the altar; and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, ‘Put in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe.’ So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God.”

Clearly, the harvesting in **Matthew 13**, **Matthew 24**, and **Revelation 14**, is the taking away of the ungodly, those who reject Christ, i.e., there will always be plenty who are in need of being saved, but as our text today declares (cf. **Luke 10:2**), it would seem that only a few are going out to proclaim to them the message of salvation through Jesus!

See again Luke 10:2c, “Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. Because of the impending judgement coming upon unbelievers, we are to pray [beseech = implore, petition, plead with the Lord] for more Christians to be about the ministry of seeking to save the lost. We are to have compassion for those who have not yet come to Christ for salvation; our concern should be for the unsaved.

As we await the time when all true believers will be caught up to meet Christ in the air, we are to be reaching out to the world with the message of Jesus Christ (**2Corinthians 5:20-21**), “We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

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May we each live out and proclaim the life-saving and life-giving Gospel of Christ, to every person who will listen, for whatever time we may have left. We must urgently, boldly and yet humbly, with compassion, share the Good News, that Jesus Christ died for our sins, was buried, then rose from the grave to demonstrate eternal life, before ascending back into haven from where He had come; and He will return to take all those who believe in Him, to live together in heaven, where there will be no more mourning or crying or pain or death, but only perfect peace and harmony, for all of eternity.

And all God’s people said, Amen!

Pastor Mike Hale