



Luke 10:1–3

10 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.

Reflection

Last week we read in Luke 9:51,

51 As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.

The writing is on the wall. Jesus has set his face towards Jerusalem. Shortly he will cry out to her and all she represents,

34 'Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing.

Jesus, like the prophets of old, will die in

Jerusalem. He's said so twice already to his inner circle, but they haven't fully understood him. In Luke 9:22 Jesus said,

‘The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.’

And then again in chapter 9 verse 44,

44 ‘Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men.’

But, verse 45,

they did not understand what this

meant.

Time is running short. The time is approaching for Jesus to be taken up into heaven. And so in today's passage Jesus begins to ramp up his training of his followers in order that they might be able to carry on his mission after he is gone. Today Jesus' training extends beyond his twelve disciples to the seventy-two, and further, to include even you and I. Reading from Luke 10:1–3,

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fore, to send out workers into his harvest field. 3 Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.

That word 'Lord' was first used by Peter to address Jesus (5:8). Then by the centurion in Luke 7 (Luke 7:6) and James and John in chapter 9 (Luke 9:54). Other would-be disciples follow suit (9:59, 61) and increasingly Luke begins to use the title – God's title, and the title of God's anointed king the Messiah – to refer to Jesus. See there in verse 1,

10 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.

As Lord, Jesus appoints others to go out on mission ahead of him. He sends out seventy-two others ahead of him, to prepare the way in many towns and villages for the good news of the kingdom of God. Now you might notice in your Bible's footnotes that the 'seventy-two' in our passage could also be a 'seventy.' The ancient manuscripts that the Bible comes from are roughly split down the middle. Seventy-two or seventy. It turns out that the two numbers were used almost synonymously in ancient Jewish writing, and were used more for their symbolic quality instead of quantity. Many scholars see in them a reference to Genesis 10 in which the Hebrew version of the Old Testament lists seventy Gentile nations (that is, seventy non-Jewish nations); the same place where the Greek version of the Old Tes-

tament lists seventy-two. Just as Jesus appointed twelve disciples to mirror the twelve tribes of Israel here Jesus symbolically sends out the seventy-two to anticipate later mission to all the nations of the earth.

We imagine people travelling with Jesus all of a sudden, unexpectedly singled out and given this commission, verse 2,

‘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

This moment of commissioning anticipates the resurrected Jesus’ Great Commission to everyone who would follow him (which

includes you and I). Matthew, Mark, Luke and John each climax in their own version of the Great Commission because it is that important. And Luke's sequel, the book of Acts, which depicts the explosive growth of the early Christian church does so as a result of obedience to the Great Commission which is foundational to its first few verses. Acts 1:6–8,

6 Then they gathered round [Jesus] and asked him, 'Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?'

7 He said to them: 'It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 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.'

But perhaps Matthew says it best, the final words of his Gospel, to the twelve, the seventy-two and to us,

18 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, baptising 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.' Matthew 28:18–20

‘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 ...

Wait for it ...

... like lambs among wolves.

Like lambs to the slaughter. Just as Jesus our Passover Lamb sacrificed his life for the sins of the world so too he asks us to go out, to lay down our lives for the sake of the Gospel. For the sake of continuing his mission on earth. So that the Gospel of his grace might go out to every nation on earth. And blood was shed, huge amounts of it in the establishment of the Christian church. The twelve (barring perhaps one)

were all martyred. Stephen was stoned. Nero lit up Christians as torches to light his gardens at night. Like lambs among the wolves. And there was a great, great harvest.

Think Pray

This harvest continues today. This past century more people have come to faith and more blood has been shed cumulatively than in the nineteen hundred years since Jesus walked our earth. So please spend some time meditating over this short passage of Scripture this morning and applying it to your own walk with Jesus. Unexpectedly Jesus called the seventy-two; just like he calls you and I to mission. No doubt many of them felt unprepared and ill equipped to share the Gospel. But Je-

us sent them out anyway. Just as he has sent you and I out ahead of him into our families, our workplaces, our communities and friendship circles to prepare the way for him in the lives of the people we know. Perhaps he might be preparing you right now to go even further afield. The harvest is plentiful. The costs will be high but the rewards will last into all eternity.

Pray

Pray this morning to the Lord of the Harvest. Ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field. Ask him to equip you, train you and throw you into the deep end to reap the harvest that he has sown in the lives and hearts of the many, many people yet to give their lives to him. And pray also this morning for the

persecuted church. Why not Google 'Voice of the Martyrs' or 'Open Doors' so that you can pray more specifically for our Christian brothers and sisters shedding their blood for the Gospel in some of the world's most dangerous countries. Pray for them today, as no doubt they are praying for you.