

The Gospel According to Luke
Luke 10:1-20
Reading: Luke 10:1-12

Sermon #44
August 11, 2019

Lambs in the Midst of Wolves
Called – Sent – Named

Called

Teresa of Avila who lived in the 16th century said, “**Christ has no body on earth but yours; no hands but yours; no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through which the compassion of Christ looks out to the world. Yours are the feet with which he is to go about doing good. Yours are the hands with which he is to bless others now.**” It is a great mystery, in that God does not need us and yet created us, he does not need us to accomplish his plan of redemption for mankind and yet, he calls us and gives us the privilege of being his ambassadors. God does not need us and yet, he has chosen for believers to be his eyes and hands and feet to be sent and bless the world until his return. The Psalmist wrote, “**Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart.**” (Psalm 119:2) Our passage this morning is relevant to our lives and the life of Canyon Bible Church because it speaks to this very thing.

Our text opens with Jesus choosing and sending out 72 missionaries with the message of the kingdom of God. There are some translations they say 70 and some say 72. Both are allowed within the structure. It appears to me that 72 is more appropriate. This variance does not affect the meaning of the passage. It also appears 72 is symbolic of the nations of the world. As you know, by now, I love history and trivia. Genesis chapter 10 lists 72 nations and the Apocrypha (secret, or non-canonical) Book of Enoch, a non-biblical or canonized writing, lists 72 princes and 72 languages of the world. The Septuagint (LXX) the oldest translation of the

Hebrew Scriptures or Old Testament into Hellenistic Greek was accomplished by 72 elders. Now that I have settled why I believe 72 is better than 70, we can move on to what Jesus wants us to learn from this passage.

Luke is the gospel written for the Gentiles; Matthew was written for the Jews. Luke's audience was deemed unacceptable to the Jewish religious establishment. This may be why we find more stories in Luke's gospel account that includes the unacceptable people to the Jewish religious elite. In Luke we find stories of Jesus with Samaritans, women, lepers, tax collectors, the poor and others beneath the Jews. So, Luke's concern in his gospel account is the going out – taking the gospel out beyond the Jews, beyond Israel to the Gentile world.

The first question that I had as I studied, was why by twos, why sent out 36 pairs? Jesus reminds the Pharisees in John chapter 8, **“In your Law it is written that the testimony of two people is true.”** (John 8:17) Jesus was reminding the Pharisees of what was written in the Book of Numbers in chapter 35, verse 30 concerning the testimony required to convict a person of a crime and the weight of witnesses. This holds true for us today; witnessing our faith and sharing the gospel to others is better done with 2 or more. The next thing to notice is Luke does not say these 72 volunteered, but that Jesus appointed them – he handpicked them for this mission. Take a moment and think how it must have felt to have the Messiah personally pick a person for such an important assignment. In your mind's eye see the inner circle of 12 chosen disciples gathered around Jesus and beyond the 12, the hundreds of believing disciples and then beyond these disciples, the true believers, are the crowds being taught by Jesus. Jesus moves among the people and as he does, he touches and chooses the 72. Now, that you have imagined this scene and the privilege and as you saw this scene played out in your mind's eye – you need to stop and place yourself in this scene – for each person here who has

accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior was handpicked by him and not for some “willy-nilly” reason, but for a specific purpose and just like the 72 he picked 2000 years ago and you can obey or refuse his call to you for ministry in his name. Jesus saves and teaches and calls and sends and names, but you must accept and obey. Jesus commands the universe and it obeys, he commands the winds and the seas and the dead to rise – they all obeyed – should we not obey the Lord of the universe? It is truly a heart issue. Obedience is the privilege of being a child of God, just as being called by God and being saved by his grace and named his child is.

Jesus’ plan included travel to and teaching in certain locations. In chapter 9 Luke recorded that Jesus had “[set his face to go to Jerusalem.](#)” (v.51) Luke is speaking of more than Jesus planned to travel to the city of Jerusalem and teach. It was Jesus’ plan from the beginning to allow man to put him to death for the salvation of those called by God and nothing would be permitted to change the plan of God’s redemption. The end was approaching and his focus was on Jerusalem – a city that had lost its way, a city of religious corruption, a city called to worship the one true God and yet, had made God into their man-made religion. If we do not learn from God’s Word and history it will be repeated, as we can observe in the world around us. Jesus followed God the Father’s path for mankind’s redemption and nothing could change it.

Sent

Jesus states in chapter 10, verse 2, “[The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.](#)” There is more work to be done than the 12 can manage – Jesus therefore, calls and sends and names the 72 to demonstrate the need and to set the example for all believers to be equipped and to evangelize. How does this apply to the East

Mountains and to Canyon Bible? Are there not more people who are unbelieving than believing? Are there not more who do not go to church than go? We are the workers and a field of harvest is here and is before us. We need to take the gospel of Jesus out to the community. Sunday morning service is for believers and those seeking to know Jesus. It is meant to recharge your spiritual batteries after living in the unsaved world each week. It is meant to equip you and enable you to have the spirit-filled knowledge you need to share the gospel and it is meant for the fellowship of community that strengthens and binds us together. But, how can we, as a community, reach out to the lost? This is not just a question for leadership but for each of us. The natural cycle or rhythm of life often flows around the seasons. Summer is drawing to a close, school is beginning and vacations are over. How can we consider these things and develop a plan to reach out to the lost? We will take time at the end of the message to come together and pray and seek the Lord and his plans for how we can take his gospel to the lost, for those that he has put into our lives and surrounded us with.

Jesus told the 72 in verse 3, **“Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.”** The role of those Jesus was sending out was not to protect what they had, but to give it away. They were to travel light, Jesus told the 72, ⁴**“Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road.”** Do not worry about tomorrow but be focused on the mission of the day. Jesus tells the 72 to take their faith; the love of God and the Messiah and take courage for the world does not want to hear the truth, but he wants them to leave their possessions that weights them down and their egos behind. When Joyce, our children and I went to Papua New Guinea we packed many things in 55-gallon drums to be loaded into a cargo container and brought by ship PNG. When the ship arrived, the container was loaded onto a truck but it was hijacked in route. This was the best

thing that could have happened to us. Instead of having much more than the people we had come to serve and separating us from them – we had very little – the clothes we had packed and it helped us be more like those we had come to serve. We were accepted. Some months later the 5 village chiefs came to me and told me they wanted to give us Fore tribal names. I asked is this something they had done before and they said we were the first foreigners to come and be just like them; to eat with them, sleep with them, work with them – we had become part of the tribe. God knew that all that stuff we had packed into barrels was a hindrance – praise God he saw fit to remove all that stuff. When we take the gospel to the lost, we should be as much like the people we serve as possible – except where it goes against scripture. As Paul wrote in his 1st letter to the Corinthians, ¹⁹“For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. ²⁰To the Jews I became **as a Jew**, in order to win Jews. Paul does say he lived different that Christ had called him to, but to win people for Christ he was able to be “as a” Jew. **To those under the law (*Jews*) I became **as one** under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. Not one under the law but “as one” under the law. ²¹To those outside the law (*Gentiles*) I became **as one** outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. Not outside the law but “as one” outside the laws of the Jewish religion. ²²To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. Here there is a change, Paul became weak or meek or humble as Christ was weak or meek and humble. **I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. ²³I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.”** (1 Corinthians 9:19-23) Paul found what we call today bridges to relate to people and share the gospel in a way that would be meaningful. This is the purpose of preaching today and our goal in sharing the gospel with the lost.**

Jesus tells the 72 leave all your agendas behind, take the gospel with the heart of a servant and let the Holy Spirit work through you. In verse 4, Jesus says, **“Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road.”** Greet no one on the road – this puzzled me. But here is what I think about this. The 72 had a mission and they were to keep focused and not let anyone detour them. It is easy to get sidetracked and that would please the evil one if the 72 or if we lose our focus and are less effective for the kingdom of God. My beloved do not let the world and its material attractions or people detour you from your primary objective in life – living and sharing the kingdom of God. Jesus said that as the 72 went, they were to say, **“Peace be to this house!”** This is a greeting to those who were open to hearing the truth, the gospel of the kingdom of God. It implies that these were those greeted and they, in turn, responded with a reply of peace to these missionary evangelists. The 72 were not to belabor with those whose heart, mind and ears were closed to the gospel. They then and we now need to spend our time in the fields that can be cultivated and respond to the gospel and produce harvest for the kingdom of God. We need to keep in mind that this can take various amounts of time depending on the field – the E. Mts. or the Muslims of Pakistan.

Remember also, at this point the 72, were most likely, all Jews. The Old Testament is filled with man-made laws and rules that over time separated people from God. This is like some of what are called “distinctives” that set denominations apart from one other today in order to say, “You are one of us or one of them.” Jesus does not want man-made rules to separate the Church of Christ or deter the sharing of the gospel, so, in verse 7 he instructs, **“remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide.”** Jesus is saying, do not go shopping for only a Jewish house or rich person’s house or where only legal foods are provided, but be content with where I send you and with those who want to

hear the gospel. Peter, a Jew and Jesus' disciple, struggled with this very thing. In Acts chapter 10 we read he responded to Jesus's vision about clean and unclean foods, "Peter said, 'By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.'¹⁵ And the voice came to him again a second time, 'What God has made clean, do not call common.'" (Acts 10:14-15) Jesus was clear and to the point with Peter as to how he should consider clean and unclean foods. Peter being a Jew had a hard time letting go of his "Jewishness" even with this clear instruction from Jesus. Paul later had to confront Peter about this. Reading from chapter 2 of Galatians, "when Cephas, Peter, came to Antioch, I, Paul, opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned."¹² For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party.¹³ And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy." (Galatians 2:11-13) How we act is important and does communicate what we believe. Being American is second to being Christian. As we observe from Paul's encounter with Peter; his hypocritical behavior was leading others astray. As missionaries Joyce and my behavior communicated many things. For example, we had to eat a number of things we would rather have not, but to not eat what was offered would have insulted those whose homes we were in and the sacrifice they made to honor us with food and fellowship. The focus of our lives is always to be living the gospel and when we fail, we must admit our failure and repent and seek forgiveness as Peter did on a number of occasions.

Jesus continues his instructions to the 72 in verse 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.'" First, be humble and kind, it does not cost anything to be kind to others. As Paul made clear and is a

restatement of Jesus' instructions to the 72, believers are to "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves." (Philippians 2:3) The 72 were **not** sent out with a medical or money bag, but the power and authority of Jesus and it was by Jesus' authority they were instructed "Heal the sick." With faith in Jesus - nothing was out of the realm of possibility. Miraculous signs are for the purpose of bringing God glory, to validate the gospel of Christ so that people may believe and for the benefit of the church – it is not so much about the individual Jesus' uses as his instrument. This is why miracles, prophecies, healings and tongues are to be held up to the standard of the scriptures to validate them. Today, as in the time of the early church, these gifts were often abused and misused. They are for God's glory and the kingdom and it was not about those he used as his instruments. So, Jesus says heal the sick and adds "say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near you.'" Healing the sick shows compassion and demonstrates Jesus' power and validates the kingdom of God. When I worked in unreached areas of the world, where there was no Bible in the people's heart language, no church and no believers, it was not unusual for the first believers to come to faith through miraculous signs and visions. However, as the Bible was translated and the church was established these miraculous signs lessened because they were no longer as necessary. The key is to go where Jesus sends you – near or far and faithfully share the gospel of Christ that brings the kingdom of God into people's lives and letting the Holy Spirit guide and empower. If the 72 were rejected, if you are rejected, when sharing the gospel do not fret or get angry, reading verse 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.'" Not everyone is called, not everyone will be receptive and when one rejects the gospel, they are not so much rejecting you but rejecting the Lord their God. We need to also remember if we live the gospel and

show kindness our Lord says, “Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near.” People find it hard to show anger with someone who is kind. So, we are to have patience and let the Lord work through us. Joyce prayed for 13 years for my salvation before the Lord saved me.

Named

The 72 set off possibly with concerns and doubts, but faithfully they went. They went with nothing, no bag, no food – they went with the instructions of their Lord to share the gospel and bless people. Because they were obedient to Jesus, they had the amazing privilege of seeing evil pushed aside and God’s glory replace evil. Because of their faithfulness they were amazed; we know this by what they said to Jesus upon their return, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!” They are clear what was accomplished was by Jesus’ authority and power not theirs. Jesus was aware of all that they did and the events of their travel, saying, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. ¹⁹ Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. ²⁰ Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

Let me take a moment to address verse 19, “Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you.” We can take this verse literally or symbolically. Serpents were a symbol of evil beginning in the garden after the fall, God says to Satan, “*man shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.*” (Genesis 3:15) In Numbers chapter 21 when the people spoke against God, he sent serpents and many died and God used the symbol of a brass serpent to heal those who were faithful to look upon it. Jesus was not saying the 72 did not sin, “for all have sinned

and fall short of the glory of God,²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 3:23-24) As sinners we have no power over evil apart from the power given by Christ for his plan of redemption of mankind. What the 72 and what we are instructed is to “rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” Because of Christ and Christ alone has called and named believers, we are reconciled back to God and will live with God in heaven.

Jesus did not tell the 72 their assignment would be easy, nor should we believe living for Christ will be easy. Jesus said to the 72 and he says to us as believers, “Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.” The gospel is simple and true, but it is not easy for it requires one to die to self and live up to the name given to us by Christ – we are children of the living God. The power of God is unlimited and only limited in us by our refusal to do as he commands, we are to live to honor his name. God, for reasons he chose, works through believers – those he has called and named. He has replaced your spiritually dead soul with a soul that is alive and God the Holy Spirit lives within you. Each day we must die to self and let the Spirit reign in our very being. When we do this, we will be Jesus’ laborers in the fields and like the 72 will be amazed with what the Lord does – does in us and through us.

This is the reason I want to now spend time in prayer – seeking the will of God in each of our lives and the life of our community. Questions I have been thinking and praying about and am now asking you to consider and pray over: Should we have a Wednesday mid-week service or Bible study? What about our youth? How can we better prepare and support them in growing deeper in their faith to live in a world of wolves? How best can we reach out to those around us? To the clients of the Food Pantry? To the people of the East Mountains? We now have a building we can use 24/7 – how can we best utilize it? To answer these

questions and more – let us now seek God. Let us break up into small groups and pray and then we will come back together to see if the Lord has revealed his will in any way. We will close in song.