

“SENT WITH THE GOSPEL”
LUKE 10:1-16

In 1786 a man named William was ordained for the pastorate and sent to a small church in the town of Moulton, England. Both he and the church were very poor, and it took three jobs for William to support his family: pastor, cobbler, and village teacher.

In his cobbler’s workshop, William made a large homemade map of the world and began collecting data on the world’s population. This data was compiled into an 87-page book in 1791: *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of Heathens, in which the religious state of the different nations of the world, the success of former undertakings, and the practicability of further undertakings, are considered.* This “‘little piece,’ as William called it, would become the manifesto of the modern missionary movement.” The man, of course, is **William Carey** and his passion for the salvation of the lost is seen throughout the document, but perhaps most boldly in his statement, “I question whether all are justified in staying here, while so many are perishing without means of grace in other lands.”



On May 31, 1792, Carey was asked to speak to a group of pastors from an association of 24 churches. He chose as his text Isaiah 54:2-3 and in that sermon he uttered words that have stimulated the missions movement for the next 2-½ centuries: **“Expect great things; attempt great things.”** His meaning is clear — God is the provider of all and many great things, and on the basis of God’s provision, the believer is to attempt similarly great things that will bring honor and glory to the name of God.

Less than a year later, Carey and John Thomas and their families were on their way to India with the gospel. All of them would die in India, never returning to England; Carey died 41 years later.

What was the result of Carey’s ministry in India? He either translated or directly oversaw and edited 41 partial or complete translations of the Bible. He was instrumental in the planting of Lall Bazar Chapel in Calcutta in 1809 — a church that continues in ministry to this day, now under the name Carey Baptist Church. During his ministry they oversaw the opening of over 100 schools for the Biblical education of Indians. The man who had an elementary education was given a doctorate in linguistics and served as a Department Chairman of the Fort William College in Calcutta for 30 years (from 1801 until 1830). He also was instrumental in the abolition of infanticide, abortion, slavery and *sati* in India. And by the time of his death in 1834, there were 50 missionaries serving in 18 mission stations in India.

Carey was a simple, common man who was used by God for remarkable purposes. His life was marked by the simple statement made that sermon in 1792: “expect great things; attempt great things.”

The question of who will go and serve God in ministry is an old one. Think about Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and the rest of the prophets. And the Twelve apostles (“sent ones”), and Paul and Barnabas. And the 72 followers of Christ, which is the account from Luke in front of us today (Lk. 10:1-16).

As we come to this passage we need to recognize that this was a unique event; the instructions and commissioning in this passage are for the 72 *on that event*. It was a one-time commissioning. However, the principles that Jesus gave in sending the 72 are fitting for us as well, as we think about ministry, missions, evangelism, and building the church. This passage immediately follows the narrative of three almost-followers of Christ; it serves as a contrast, and it also gives us a picture of what it means to follow Christ. What did Jesus command the 72 to do and how did they demonstrate that they were following Christ?

TO FOLLOW CHRIST, SERVE CHRIST.

In this passage we learn how to follow Christ by **carrying out six responsibilities of serving Christ**. The principles in this passage guide us as we think about missions and sending William and Natalyn overseas; it informs how we think about evangelizing our community, and it directs how we plan for the ministry of this church and use the gifted people God has given us.

1. **Serve Christ by Submitting to His AUTHORITY (vv. 1-2)**
2. **Serve Christ by Conforming Your EXPECTATIONS (v. 3)**
3. **Serve Christ by Recognizing the URGENCY (v. 4)**
4. **Serve Christ by Trusting His PROVISION (vv. 5-8)**
5. **Serve Christ by Doing His WORK (vv. 9-12)**
6. **Serve Christ by Declaring His WARNING (vv. 13-16)**

1. Serve Christ by Submitting to His AUTHORITY (vv. 1-2)

- Luke observes that Jesus **appointed 70 others** — an allusion to **9:1ff**; these are 70 beyond the Twelve.
 - ✓ Some of your translations say “72” instead of “70” — the Gk. manuscripts are divided evenly. It’s most likely that the number is 72 because some may have rounded down to “70.”
 - ✓ The different numbers have no impact on the meaning of the text, other than to recognize that Jesus was training and using more than the Twelve. Ministry is not for a select few but for all followers of Christ. (We believe in *every member ministry* — it takes all members working for the church to function well and flourish.)
 - ✓ What is important is that Jesus **appointed** these men to go. It is yet another demonstration of His authority over mankind. He appointed them to do several things:
 - He appointed them to go **in pairs** (like the Twelve, Mk. 6:7) as a confirmation of their testimony that Jesus was the Messiah (Num. 35:30; Dt. 19:15).
 - He sent them **ahead of Him...** The sending of the Twelve (9:1) was *after* the ministry of Jesus in Galilee, as something of a summary or final appeal to the residents there; in this instance, Jesus is sending them ahead in preparatory fashion, probably like John the Baptist’s ministry.
 - He commanded them to **pray** (v. 2). Again, Luke is emphasizing **the priority of prayer**.
 - ... We pray for the salvation of the lost; but that’s not the prayer here: the prayer is for workers to go and do the task. “Ask God to send workers to work for Him.”
 - ... It’s a reminder to us that while we work and we serve, it is God who does the work, preparing and then sending His workers. It’s the Lord’s mission and work.
 - ... We need to ask for His provision and help.
 - ... Before sending the 72, Jesus points out that the spiritual need is great and the workers are few — they needed (and we need) God to provide the workers and the strength.
 - ✓ The command to pray is a reminder that we can be tempted to work without praying — we may feel the need to work hard because **the laborers are few**. But we cannot work until we have prayed. The work of the 72 and our work begins first with prayerful dependence on Him.
 - ✓ When Carey left for India, he said to his friend Andrew Fuller, “I will go down into the pit if you will hold the ropes.” And for 41 years, people like Fuller and Carey’s sister who “was bedridden for years, but spent hours each day interceding for the ministry of her brother and for others who were beginning to follow the trail he blazed.” [D.A. Carson]
- Has God gifted you spiritually and compelled you to use that gift and are you using it?
- And are you praying for workers? For workers in Indonesia and Africa and Canada and Granbury...?

2. Serve Christ by Conforming Your **EXPECTATIONS** (v. 3)

- With the command to go, Jesus also offers a warning to the 72 — *Go...I send you out as lambs...*
 - ✓ He is reminding them that *He* is sending — they go because of His compelling command.
 - ✓ And He is sending continually — **Go** is a present tense — “always go...keep going...Finish...”
 - ✓ And they go with a renewed and transformed mindset — He wants them to think about ministry and servants the way that He does: it won’t be easy; it will be hard and troubled.
 - ✓ “Disciples will minister under duress.” [Bock]
 - ✓ The phrase pictures both the nature of the 72 and the world —
 - The 72 are like **lambs** — weak, vulnerable, and defenseless.
 - Those in the world are like **wolves** — hostile, aggressive, and even violent against Christ and His followers (e.g., **Jn. 15:20**; **1 Pt. 4:12-14**).
 - Christ is the great protector of the sheep (**1 Pt. 2:25**), but don’t confuse “He will protect our souls” with “He won’t let us suffer and die.” We *will* all die (and some will die as persecuted martyrs) — and our death is the final validation of Christ’s protection of our souls.
 - We can also be confident that He will protect us from death until our work is done; the 72 were opposed by synagogue officials, etc., but because Christ **sent** they finished what He sent them to do.
- What is the expectation that needs conforming to Christ? We must expect trouble, difficulty, and suffering when we serve Christ. Life is risky. Ministry is risky. And God is good.
 - ✓ Why does anyone go when there is risk? Someone asked me when I took my daughter to Cambodia to visit missionaries, “Why would you do that? It’s not safe.” “Because I want to teach her that God loves the people of Cambodia as well, and *someone* needs to take the gospel to them...”
 - ✓ When we are obeying and serving Christ, as John Piper has said, “Risk is right.”

“Missionaries constantly face expendability. And people who do not know the Lord ask why in the world we waste our lives as missionaries. They forget that they too are expending their lives. They forget that when their lives are spent and the bubble has burst they will have nothing of eternal significance to show for the years they have wasted.

“Some might say, isn’t it too great a price to pay? When missionaries consider themselves — their lives before God — they consider themselves expendable. And in our personal lives as Christians isn’t the same thing true? Isn’t the price small in the light of God’s infinite love?” [Nate Saint; son of Steve; co-martyr with Jim Eliot.]

3. Serve Christ by Recognizing the **URGENCY** (v. 4)

- We first see the urgency of the task for the 72 in v. 3 — when Jesus says “Go,” He intends them to leave immediately; the cross was only months away and many still needed to hear the Messianic truth...
- The urgency is emphasized in this verse — **carry no money belt...**

- ✓ They weren't to carry a **money belt** as a sign of trust that God would provide (vv. 7ff).
 - ✓ **No bag** stressed the urgency and immediacy (and shortness) of the journey — “don't go home to pack extra things...just go and trust God will provide.”
 - ✓ **No shoes** was not a command to go barefoot but to go without a second pair of shoes (if laces broke).
 - ✓ **Greet no one** was not a command to rudeness but urgency — greeting someone could be an elaborate and lengthy ceremony including meals; they had a place to go and they weren't to delay.
 - ✓ All this fundamentally was about trusting God, as Jesus later reinforced (22:35).
- While this urgent commissioning was for the 72 and our situation is different when we go to serve (we aren't telling Will and Natalyn to go without a change of clothes); the principle of gospel urgency still applies. The days are evil and there is shortness of time (Eph. 5:16). The gospel is essential.

4. Serve Christ by Trusting His **PROVISION** (vv. 5-8)

- It was the practice of itinerant speakers in that day to find lodging in the best home in every town; they would “upgrade” until they got to that home. Jesus is telling the 72 not to do that.
 - ✓ **Whatever house you enter, first say, “Peace be to this house”** (v. 5). While “peace” (*shalom*) was a common greeting, this is greeting and offer of the peace that comes from believing the Messiah (e.g., 2:14; 7:50; 8:48). Here it is more than just the offer of a blessing, but also a question of faith.
 - ✓ If the head of the house is **a son of peace** (v. 6, lit.), then he is a believer in the Messiah and he will also receive the blessing from the disciple. And the disciple is to stay there (v. 7).
 - ✓ As a sign that the head of the house believes in the Messiah, he will provide for the disciple. So Jesus says, **stay...eating and drinking what they give you**. They are considered as members of the family and they eat and function in the home as family (they eat what is **set before them**, v. 8 — not picky).
- Jesus reminds them that **the laborer is worthy of his wages** — those who work can expect wages. This is the same principle of 1 Cor. 9:14; 1 Tim. 5:18 (Dt. 25:4). This is the foundation for supporting those who go out as missionaries as well (3 Jn. 5-8).
 - ✓ Jesus is affirming that it is appropriate to expect care when we serve Him (like missionaries).
 - ✓ And He is teaching us to trust His provision. He is not miserly.
 - ✓

5. Serve Christ by Doing His **WORK** (vv. 9-12)

- There was a particular task Christ gave to the 72 (very much like the Twelve):
 - ✓ **Heal the sick** is a shortened form of the command in 9:1-2; it seems likely that He also empowered them to cast out demons (vv. 17-19). These miracles authenticated the message (4:18; 7:22).
 - ✓ What was most important was the message — **the Kingdom of God has come near...**

- ✓ The sense is “the Kingdom has already come near...” suggesting that it is close in proximity, even though it had not yet fully arrived.
 - ✓ In what sense was it close? *The King was there!* While not all the blessings of His Kingdom were realized on His first visit, there were there beginnings of some parts of Kingdom promises (24:49).
 - ✓ Just as John the Baptist preached repentance to enter the Kingdom of God, so Jesus is sending the 72 to do the same thing. He is calling them to preach repentance and faith to enter the Kingdom.
- And then He also warns that not everyone will believe their message. Whenever that happened (v. 10), they were to [publically] **shake the dust [off your] feet...** (v. 11). It’s a way of saying, “we are leaving and we are taking nothing of you with us; we are leaving you behind us...” It’s condemnation.
 - And even while the city may reject them and their message, they are to remind the city, **be sure that the Kingdom of God has come near**. I.e., “your rejection of the truth doesn’t change the truth...” The King *has* come and the *Kingdom* is close in proximity to you, if you would believe.
 - ✓ They are culpable for their unbelief. Judgment will come to them for their unbelief.
 - ✓ In fact, their denial of the message of the 72 was a greater sin than the sin and judgment of **Sodom** (v. 12; Gen. 19:15-29). On the day of judgment, Sodom would “do better” (would be **more tolerable** — endurable) than a city that rejected the message of one of the 72 commissioned men.
 - The task of the 72 was hard (persecution) but simple (not complicated) — preach the gospel and affirm the gospel. That is our task as well. It is tempting to pursue many different kinds of ministry that are creative and “compelling.” Our task is to “preach the Word” (2 Tim. 4:2). We preach the truth of God and the gospel of God and we trust the Word of God do its work.

6. Serve Christ by Declaring His **WARNING (vv. 13-16)**

- Following up on v. 12, Jesus gives an extended warning in vv. 13-16. The warning of v. 12 was for a potential rejection of Christ and the gospel; these warnings are for rejections that *had* happened.
 - ✓ **Chorazin** (exact location unknown) and **Bethsaida** were small cities near Capernaum (north side of the Sea of Galilee). **Capernaum** was Jesus “home” while He ministered in Galilee (Mt. 4:13). All of them saw much of Jesus’ ministry, and they rejected Him. Their rejection was not overt, like Nazareth; they just didn’t repent. They didn’t believe that He was the Messiah. They were apathetic.
 - ✓ **Tyre and Sidon** would have believed if they had the same opportunity to hear from Messiah (cf. Ezk. 26-28; this also reveals Christ’s omniscience). This warning also reveals that there are degrees of judgment in Hell — there are “worse” places to be in Hell, and that’s where C & B were going.
 - ✓ Likewise, Capernaum, though the home city of Jesus, would not be exalted to Heaven, but **brought down to Hades** (Sheol). The inhabitants of Capernaum received Hell for their rejection of Jesus.
 - ✓ The cities were destroyed and are no longer in existence; but something far worse awaited them.

- ✓ And as an encouragement to the 72, Jesus reminded them that any rejection they faced was not because of them but because of Christ (v. 16). To reject gospel preaching is to reject Christ and the Father (*the One who sent* Jesus). There is a much greater rejection (and culpability) for those who rejected the 72 than merely rejecting them. (Don't take rejection "personally" — it's about Jesus.)
- This is a reminder that part of preaching the gospel is also preaching the consequences of unbelief — if you do not believe Christ, there may not seem to be consequences now; but there will be. And it will be more horrible and longer (eternally) than we can possibly imagine (cf. 16:19ff).
- Like the 72 were called to do, so I also plead with you to repent and believe Christ if you do not yet believe. Follow Him. He will never disappoint you.

CONCLUSION:

I said at the beginning of this message that the principles in this passage guide us as we think about missions and sending church members overseas; it informs how we think about evangelizing our community, and it directs how we plan for the ministry of this church and use the gifted people God has given us.

What is your role in the church and in serving Christ? Do you demonstrate that you are a follower of Christ by your service of Christ? We will continue to grow and mature as a church body as we all willingly serve Christ according to His expectations of our suffering, trusting Him, and doing the basic work of the gospel and unfolding the Scriptures to a needy world. Let's pray...

BENEDICTION: Jude 24-25