



**#1 In the Along the Way Series**

# **THE HARVEST**

**Forest Park Church**

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## **Series Intro:**

### **Luke 9:51**

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

Jesus has just finished making sure that His followers understand what being a disciple is all about.

### **Luke 9:57**

*As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." 58 And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." 59 To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." 60 And Jesus said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." 61 Yet another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home." 62 Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."*

## **He introduced them to the concept of cost.**

- There will be costs as well.
- For some the cost may be greater and of a different type than others,
- Disciple will cost you something
- Maybe this is why the modern Church is so hesitate to engage in discipleship.

**There should be a cost. The cost means it's worth something.**

Hudson Taylor was traveling on a Chinese junk from Shanghai to Ningpo. He had been witnessing to a man named Peter who rejected the gospel but was under deep conviction. In the course of events, Peter fell overboard, but no one made any effort to save him. Taylor sprang to the mast, let down the sail, and jumped overboard in hopes of finding his friend. But no one on board joined Taylor in his frantic search.

Taylor saw a fishing boat nearby and yelled to them to help, but they wouldn't do it without money. Finally, after bartering for every penny that Taylor had, the fishermen stopped their fishing and began to look for Peter. In less than a minute of dragging their net, they found him, but it was too late. They were too busy fishing to care about saving a drowning man.

It's easy for us to condemn the selfishness of those fishermen, but can we point at them without pointing at ourselves as well.

- Are we too busy with our jobs
- and other activities to take the time to rescue those who are perishing without Christ?

### **I realize its not a perfect analogy.**

- We've got to be tactful and wait for the right opening before we talk to a person about spiritual things.
- But if a person's response to the gospel is the deciding factor in where he or she will spend eternity,
- Are we as eager as we should be to get this crucial message to them?
- Do we have the proper sense of urgency about spiritual matters that we ought to have?
- Or, could it be that we really don't care all that much?

Our text records something not found in any of the other gospel accounts:

- Jesus appointed 72 (or 70) others (besides the 12) and sent them ahead of Him to proclaim the gospel in the cities and villages where He was going to come.

The question of whether it was 72 or 70 is one of the most difficult textual questions in the New Testament to resolve, since the evidence is quite evenly distributed.

- Commentators also debate whether there was any symbolic meaning behind the number.

- But since we cannot be certain about the number, it is tentative at best to speculate on any symbolic meaning.

**I think it's probably 72, but either way it's not a major point to spend more time on.**

**Jesus sends these workers out with instructions and warnings that are similar to those He gave to the 12 before their preaching mission (9:1-6).**

The overall thrust is that ...

The gospel is crucial because people will be judged eternally on the basis of their response to it.

This morning we are going to focus on four main themes laid out by Jesus before these teams embark on their mission, and glean how these instructions can shape our response to God's work as well.

Prayer, Mission, Message, and Urgency.

## **1. Pray.**

### **Luke 10:1-3**

*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."*

When you think about the Lord's words in verse 2, you have to ask yourself, "Do I pray for the harvest?"

- Did I pray for a harvest this past week?
- Do I regularly pray for the kingdom work around the world?
- Do I pray for His work here in Southern Louisiana?
- Do I ask Him to raise up and send out workers into His harvest?"

**Let's be honest: We all pray for the things that matter the most to us.**

- I pray for my wife, because she matters greatly to me.
- I pray often for my children, because they matter greatly to me.

- I pray for my friends and their concerns because we're close.
- If I get sick, I pray for my health, because that matters to me.
- If we're in financial difficulty or need a job, we pray earnestly for those needs, because those things matter to us.

But the important question is, "Does the Lord's harvest matter enough to me to motivate me to pray often for it?"

In Jesus model prayer in Matt. 6, what comes first?

1. Prayer for the glory of God, that the Father's name would be hallowed or revered.
2. For that to happen, we must pray next that His kingdom would come and His will be done on earth as it is done in heaven.

So to be obedient, we pray, "Lord, send out workers into Your harvest."

- We're thinking, of course, of young people who will dedicate themselves to world missions
- Of young men who will feel called to lead a Church
- There will always a need for more Godly Leaders. It is also true that a person should not go into those areas of service without a distinct call from God, and that not everyone has such a calling. Only some should devote themselves full-time to the work of the ministry.

Every believer is to be a witness of Jesus Christ to others in his or her sphere of influence.

- Every believer is to be a good steward of the material resources God has entrusted to him, so that we use our money and possessions to further His cause.

## 2. Mission.

*vs. 3-6 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.*

These folks went out with a sense of mission. We understand it was a special mission, and not everyone is commissioned by God to do what they did. But, if

we're all commanded to seek first God's kingdom and righteousness (Matt. 6:33), and to go into all the world.

it's hard to escape the fact that we all should have a sense of mission from God.

- We may meet that mission in different ways, according to our various gifts and situations.
- But whatever we do for the Lord, we ought to have the seriousness of purpose that comes from realizing that we have a job to do
- and we will give an account to the Lord of the harvest for what we did.

While the Lord's instructions to these men were unique for their mission, the overall impression you get is that they were to be focused on their task and not let anything get in the way of their mission.

**A: Jesus warns them right off that He is sending them out as sheep in the midst of wolves (10:3).**

*Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.*

- There will be opposition and danger, and they will be helpless by themselves to stand against it; thus, they must depend on God for protection.

**B: Jesus tells them (10:4) to “carry no purse, no bag, no shoes”**  
(presumably, extra sandals).

- They were to travel light and trust God for the provisions they needed.
- They shouldn't get distracted by the belongings that they were carrying with them, but should stay focused on their mission.
- They were to “greet no one on the way.” This did not mean that they were to be rude or unfriendly, but rather that they were not to get distracted with lengthy chitchat that did not contribute to their mission.
- The disciples are not to be distracted from their mission by moving from house to house in search of the best food and lodging (10:5-8).
- Rather, if someone is willing to house and feed them and the person is sympathetic to the mission, they should stay there and get on with the work.

(Jesus later changed these orders; **Luke 22:35-36**

*And he said to them, "When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?" They said, "Nothing." 36 He said to them, "But now let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one."*

**While the specific instructions do not apply to us, the main point does: We are not just to dabble in the things of God. We must stay focused on our mission.** Jesus commands every believer to "seek first His kingdom and righteousness."

A man was fishing without success when he noticed a woman nearby who was reeling in one after another. Frustrated, he finally asked the woman her secret. "Are you fishing for supper or for sport?" she asked. "I'm fishing for sport," he answered. "Well, there's your problem," the woman stated. "I'm fishing for supper."

We aren't to ask the Lord to send out hobbyists into His harvest. We're supposed to pray for workers.

- We should begin to pray, "Lord, what is my mission? What do You want me to do to further Your cause?"
- Once you figure that out, these verses give at least two warnings:

1. Don't give up because of opposition or rejection. Rather, expect it.

Sheep wandering in the midst of a wolf pack should not expect to have a jolly good time.

- Most of the opposition that Jesus and His workers encountered came from the religious establishment.
- Be prepared: If you get involved in serving the Lord, you will be criticized, mostly by those in the church.

2. Don't get distracted. Rather, stay focused on your mission.

**Jesus was known as the friend of sinners because He went to their social gatherings.**

- But He never went just to socialize.
- He always went with a purpose, to seek and to save the lost.

- If you go to social gatherings without a sense of purpose, you'll get sucked into the world's meaningless ways and you'll cease to be a worker in the harvest.
- The harvest worker's focus is always, "Where is this person at spiritually?"

Prayer, Mission, ...

### 3. The Message

*vs 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.*

- Even If their message was rejected, they were still to proclaim as they left town, "Be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near" (10:11).

Thus by their lives (healing) and by their lips, they were to proclaim the message of God's kingdom.

- The kingdom had come to these folks whether they accepted it or rejected it.
- I believe that the healing ministry here was unique,
- These men were given power to heal everyone indiscriminately as a sign of the coming of the kingdom age in Jesus.

The message of the kingdom of God draws a definite line in the sand by announcing peace to those who submit to Jesus as King, but judgment to those who refuse to submit.

- When the workers entered a home, they were first to announce peace to it.
- These were not just nice words, but were an actual announcement of God's blessing if the people accepted and submitted to the message of God's kingdom.
- If the people would not accept the message, the pronouncement of peace would return to the worker and it was to be replaced with a terrible warning of certain judgment to come (10:10-15).

Years ago a survey of professing Christians revealed that 49 percent of professing Christians agree that, All “good” people, whether they consider Jesus Christ to be Savior or not, will live in heaven after they die.

If that statistic is true, then almost half of professing Christians do not believe what Jesus plainly taught about the judgment to come and hell!

Jesus didn't speculate about the future judgment; He spoke about it with authority (10:12)!

- He makes it clear that people will be judged according to the degree of light that they rejected.
- It will be worse for those who heard plainly of Christ and rejected it than for those, such as Sodom, Tyre, and Sidon, that lacked clear witness.

But the real warning that we must take to heart is this:

**These cities that Jesus warns of terrible judgment to come were religious cities that were familiar with Jesus' message and miracles.**

- Sodom, Tyre, and Sidon were pagan Gentile cities.
- The warning is that those who sit in church and yet remain unmoved by the offer of peace with God through Christ,
- those who are familiar with spiritual truths, but who refuse to submit to Christ as Lord
- these religious people will be judged far more harshly than raw pagans who are ignorant of the gospel.

**We don't have to be out in out Rebels**

- We have only to remain cold, careless, indifferent, unmoved, and unaffected, and our end will be in hell.
- This was the ruin of Chorazin and Bethsaida.
- And this, will be the ruin of thousands, as long as the world stands.
- No sin makes less noise, but as certainly kills the soul, as unbelief

**Jesus predicts Capernaum's demise.**

- They thought highly of themselves (exalted to heaven),
- but Jesus thought otherwise, and His word stands.
- The city of Capernaum is now an uninhabited heap of ruins.
- The same that happened there could easily happen to America.

- Our nation has had great light,
- but even many of those who profess Christ show by their disobedient and self-centered lives that they are not subject to His lordship.

So our text shouts at us the words:

- Prayer (do you pray for the harvest?);
- Mission (do you labor in the harvest field?);
- Message (do you proclaim by life and lips the kingdom of God?).

## **4. Urgency:**

**Do we have a sense of the urgency in our mission?**

**Our message is not, “Try Jesus and you’ll feel better and have a happier life.”**

- We must sensitively but plainly warn people that they are sinners who face God’s certain judgment,
- but they can know peace with God if they will trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.
- Time is short; we must keep eternity constantly in view.

During the 1981 Byron Nelson Golf Tournament in Dallas, a massive tree limb broke off and fell on a spectator who was killed instantly. It happened near the third hole where Charles Coody was playing at the time. Shortly after the accident, he was interviewed on the radio and he said, “After running over and seeing the accident, I tried to play golf, yet I had no desire to play after that. All of a sudden those three foot putts didn’t seem all that important.”

The suddenness and certainty of death should instill a sense of urgency in us who know what Jesus taught about the judgment to come.

- We should pray for openings with lost people.
- We should pray that God’s people would be working in the harvest with a sense of mission.
- We should clearly proclaim the message, that Jesus is Lord and King, and that people must accept His offer of peace now or face the terrible consequences later.

# Conclusion

A few years ago the newspapers ran a story about a guy who jumped from a plane and his parachute didn't open properly. It took him more than a minute to fall 3,000 feet to the ground. In those circumstances, a minute is a long time! What do you suppose he thought about as he sped toward the ground?

People all around us are plummeting toward eternity without a parachute.

- If you know that fact, pray for the harvest and for more workers.
- Go with a sense of mission to labor in the harvest field.
- Live and speak the message in a way that honors Jesus Christ as Lord and King and that shows lost people His offer of peace.
- But don't compromise the urgent warning, that to refuse the offer means certain judgment. In light of eternity,
- the gospel is the crucial message.

**We are the messengers.**