

## “Jesus’ Ambassadors”

March 15, 2020

Luke 10:1-24

### I. Introduction

Last week we read in [Luke 9:51](#), “As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.” Jesus knew that the purpose of His coming to earth was at hand. As He began this final trip, as we saw last week, He had once again taught His followers the importance of humility, mercy, and self-denial—Characteristics of a Disciple.

Today’s Scripture introduces seventy or seventy-two disciples who were willing to deny themselves, take up their crosses daily and follow Jesus. (Some manuscripts of Luke say “70” others say “72”—there isn’t conclusive evidence for either number. This is why some translations have 70 and others 72.) This sending of 70 or 72 men shouldn’t be confused with the sending of the 12 Apostles we saw earlier in [Luke 9:1-11](#). There are similarities in the charges given, but since they were all sent by Jesus, that shouldn’t be surprising. The 12 Apostles ministered throughout Galilee, but these men were sent into Judea. The men in this chapter were not called Apostles; they were unnamed disciples.

The phrase in [Luke 10:1](#) “after this” indicates that the sending of this group took place following the events in Luke 9 which marked the end of Jesus’ Galilean ministry and the beginning of His journey to Jerusalem and His sacrifice. This journey would last for several months and would take place mainly in Judea and east of the Jordan in Perea. It would end with Jesus’ arrival in Jerusalem for the events of Passion Week which would culminate in His death and resurrection. After choosing these ambassadors, Jesus “sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.” In the first verses, Luke records Jesus’ directions to his messengers.

### II. Jesus’ Directions

**A. It was a difficult calling.** Jesus began by telling them that this was a difficult calling. From personal experience or observation, they knew that regular harvesting was hard work, even when there are

many people helping. But these men were being sent into a vast field with very few workers to help them reap a great harvest; this was going to make their task difficult. Jesus said that instead of praying for an easier job, they were to pray for more laborers to join them. This was a difficult calling.

**B. This was also a dangerous task.** They were invading enemy territory; they would really be like “lamb among wolves.” Like He did to the 12, Jesus warned them of the hostility, hatred, and danger they would face. Turn to Jesus’ words to the Twelve—turn to Matthew 10:16-20. Like innocent, helpless lambs, these men had no strength on their own and were only safe in the strength of their Shepherd.

**C. They were to trust God for their needs.** As He had done with the Twelve, Jesus didn’t allow these men to take extra provisions for their journey, such as a “purse, bag or sandals.” Nor were they to greet anyone on the way. Jesus wasn’t forbidding them from giving a polite greeting, but rather, they weren’t to be delayed on the road by elaborate Eastern greetings. This was an urgent mission. They had to trust God to meet their needs. They were to willingly accept hospitality—“for the worker deserves his wages.” As guests, they were to eat what was set before them as God’s provisions.

**D. They were to leave God’s peace.** When they arrived in a town, they were to stay in one place and not to run from house to house. They were to offer a blessing of peace to those who hosted them—as ambassadors from God, this was a blessing from God. If some refused to welcome them, then the blessing would leave that house. If a city rejected the offer of peace, then it chose judgment. It was a serious thing to reject the ambassadors of God.

**E. Their main responsibilities were to heal the sick and declare the arrival of God’s kingdom.** The kingdom of God had come near because the King was present. Finally, Jesus gave ...

**F. A Warning: There will be degrees or judgment.** In verse 12 when Jesus said, “I tell you,” He was indicating an important truth. The warning given here is not hearsay or inference, it is firsthand information from the Judge Himself. He listed six cities, three Jewish and three Gentile, and then shockingly proclaimed that the Jewish cities would face a severer judgment “on that day.” The words “It

**will be more bearable**” refer to the degree of punishment given to the unbelieving sinners at the Great White Throne Judgment, the final sentencing of the lost to the lake of fire in **Revelation 20:11-15**. In the place of eternal torment—in the lake of fire, there will be different levels of punishment. To be exposed to the gospel of Jesus Christ and reject it is to invite greater guilt and punishment. The severest punishment belongs to those who had the most knowledge of the truth.

To demonstrate His point, Jesus gave three examples of cities whose judgments would be different based on their level of exposure to the truth. He named three ancient cities that had been judged by God—three cities that the Jewish people would have named as the most evil people in history: Sodom (**Genesis 19**) and Tyre and Sidon (**Ezekiel 26-28; Isaiah 23**). Because of their stubborn rejection of the truth and their refusal to repent and trust Jesus Christ, Jesus said that the Jewish people represented by Korazin and Bethsaida and Capernaum faced a more severe judgment than those wicked Gentile cities who had never heard from God.

Jesus especially singled out Capernaum. Capernaum had been His headquarters throughout His Galilean ministry. Its people had heard His teachings and had seen countless miracles. There is no record of any obvious hostility to Jesus. They never persecuted Him or mocked Him or ridiculed Him or tried to run Him out of town. They merely tolerated Him. But indifference to Jesus Christ is the same as outright rejection—Jesus said in **Matthew 12:30**, **“Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.”**

Jesus then gave the reason for the severe judgments: **“Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me.”** To hear Jesus’ ambassadors means to hear Him, and to reject or despise His representatives means to reject and despise Him. But it goes beyond that, Jesus said, **“Whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me.”** One cannot honor God and reject Jesus Christ. **1 John 2:23** says, **“No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.”** If one rejects Jesus’ messenger, he is rejecting Almighty God and the eternal life He offers (**John 6:37, 40**).

### III. The Ambassadors Returned

**A. The Ambassadors' Joy** After a period of time, the disciples “returned with joy.” Their mission had been a success. There were three reasons for their joy.

**1. They had power over Satan's kingdom.** When they returned, they gave the first reason for their joy, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.” They had divine power over Satan's kingdom. In response to their statements, Jesus said, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.” The picture here is of Jesus rejoicing with them as He observed Satan's kingdom being destroyed one rescued soul at a time through their evangelistic ministry (Luke 15:10).

**2. They had been protected from Satan's kingdom.** Jesus said that another reason for their joy was divine protection from Satan's kingdom: “I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.” The Lord has not only given believers authority or power over Satan and the demons, represented by snakes and scorpions—they are protected from Satan's kingdom. 2 Thessalonians 3:3 says, “But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.” 1 John 4:4 says, “The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.”

**3. Their names are in the Book of Life.** Although they rejoiced in the power over and protection from Satan's kingdom that the Lord had granted them, there was a far more significant reason for them to rejoice. Jesus said, “However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” Their real joy must be that their names are written in the Book of Life (Rev. 20:15); they will experience God's blessing and love for all eternity in heaven in the mansion prepared for them (John 14:2).

**B. Jesus' Joy** There aren't many times when the Gospels record Jesus rejoicing but here in Luke 10, there are two reasons that Jesus rejoiced.

**1. God's Wise Plan of Salvation** Jesus rejoiced “because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.” Jesus rejoiced at God's wise plan of salvation. The “wise and learned” are those who are wise in their own eyes and rely on human wisdom—their own wisdom—and reject God's wisdom. It isn't intelligence but intellectual pride that shuts people out of the kingdom of God—they say things like: “*My god would never . . .*” Intelligence is a gift from God, but pride in it becomes a barrier to God. Psalm 138:6 puts it this way: “Though the LORD is on high, he looks upon the lowly, but the proud he knows from afar.” Or as the New Living Translation puts it: “Though the LORD is great, he cares for the humble, but he keeps his distance from the proud.”

In comparison to the so-called “*wise and learned,*” “little children” are those who acknowledge that they cannot save themselves; that it is only through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that they can be saved—turn to 1 Corinthians 15:1-6. Salvation is available for everyone. Peter said in Acts 2:21, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

**2. Jesus' Part in the Plan** Jesus rejoiced not only in God's sovereign plan, but also in His part in the plan. God the Father in His wisdom set the plan of redemption in motion, and He gave the Son the supreme power to bring that purpose to pass through the power of the Holy Spirit. Only Jesus can reveal God the Father to the world—John 1:18 says, “No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.” As John wrote earlier in John 1:14, “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” Only Jesus is “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). Hebrews 12:2 summons it up this way: “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

**C. Jesus' Conclusion** When He was alone with His followers, Jesus told them that they are indeed privileged people. They were able to see and hear things that the greatest saints in the Old Testament

yearned to see and hear but could not. [Hebrews 11:13](#) says, “All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth.” [Turn to 1 Peter 1:10-12](#). The Messiah was at work, and they were a part of His work! They were truly privileged to be part of Jesus’ plan.

#### IV. Conclusions

In the Great Commission in [Matthew 28:19-20](#), each Christian is told to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” [2 Corinthians 5:20](#) says, “We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.” It’s now our turn to be God’s ambassadors. It’s our responsibility to share the Gospel; words like [Romans 5:8](#) that says, “(But) God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Just like in Jesus’ day, the workers are few—that really means that we must work harder as well as pray for more workers. It is still dangerous work—the world, the children of Satan, still hate Jesus Christ and His children, but that must not stop us. We need to trust God. The words from [Philippians 4:13](#) apply to us, “I can do all things through him who gives me strength.” We have so much to offer—an eternity in heaven compared to an eternity in hell. We have “the peace that passeth understanding” ([Philippians 4:7](#)). But as [Rom. 10:14](#) says, “How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?”

Satan may, if God permits, bring trials into our lives as he did to Job, Peter, and Paul. But Satan can never take away our salvation or separate us from God’s love—[turn to Romans 8:35-39](#). We aren’t

on our own—in [Matthew 28:20](#), Jesus, “Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” In [Hebrews 13:5](#), “God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’” As Christians, we have the Holy Spirit living inside us ([1 Cor. 3:16](#)). Use the abilities and talents God gave you to share the Gospel with others so that when you stand before Him you will hear, “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!” ([Matthew 25:21](#)). *What kind of ambassador are you?*