

## **Traveling Light**

### **Luke 10:1-20**

READ Luke 10:1-20

We are once again invited to find a place for ourselves in this passage, and I think the place for all of us is with the disciples. Not so much because of their particular place or relationship with Jesus, but because the word “disciple” is a Greek translation of a word that fundamentally means “learner”. In this passage, Jesus is teaching the disciples some important lessons about their mission and about their calling, and we should be learners of those lessons along with them.

The disciples had responded to the call of Jesus to follow Him without hesitation, and the longer they followed, the more clearly they understood that following Jesus was no more optional for them than breathing. We should have that same understanding, and be as desperate for the presence of God in our every moment as we are for air to breathe. They did not have to know everything that following meant, and neither do we... just that our faith that God loves us completely is all we need to know to make following Him the only right thing we can do.

The longer we follow and learn, the more we come to understand about what it really means to be true disciples of Jesus, including the mission beyond ourselves. Jesus did not call the disciples and does not call us just for our own benefit, but for service in the kingdom of God. When we come face-to-face with the reality of who we are and the truth of who God is, and we accept the gift of God’s salvation through His grace, we know who saves us, we know what we are saved from, and we begin to learn what we are saved for.

Luke had the benefit as he wrote the Gospel of knowing the end of the story, including the part where the Risen Christ delivers the Great Commission. We find a version of that Commission at the end of the Gospel of Matthew, and Luke’s version at the beginning of the Book of Acts at Acts 1:8: “... 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.” That pretty much covers everybody. So as Luke

was writing the passage we read for today, he knew there was more to come, that what they were learning and doing with Jesus was preparing them for the mission and commission of the people of God beyond their time with Jesus on earth. We should be learning the same things.

I've picked out a few things from this passage that I hope will add to your understanding of your own commission, because we are all - you are all - commissioned for service in the kingdom of God in the same way as the people in this passage. I'm going to take them backwards through the passage.

At the end of this passage we find those who had been sent out by Jesus returning in great joy, and being received with great joy by Jesus because of the things that had been accomplished in the name of Jesus as they spread the good news of the kingdom. In celebrating the work of God with them, Jesus reminds them that work is not the prize – the prize is abundant and eternal life in the presence of God. There is great rejoicing to be done in the work of God in the world, but the real rejoicing is in the final triumph of God over evil in the new heaven and new earth and our place there.

Before that new heaven and new earth come to pass, though, comes the final judgment. We take great comfort in the truth that God never gives up on us, that we are given new opportunities every day to choose God, and God's ways and God's will for our lives. We take comfort in the second chances, and the third chances, and the ones after that, because we all need them. We will continue to sin, continue to fall short of the mark that God showed us in Jesus Christ as the perfect way to live in relationship with God, and God will continue to offer us that life. But God will not make our choices for us. God made us as creatures of free will, and while God's omniscience means that God knows the choices we will make, He does not dictate our choices. We can choose to reject Him. We can choose to put ourselves before Him, to stick to our will and our ways, and suffer the consequences of eternal life apart from Him. That's hell. God will not choose that for us, but will not keep us from choosing it for ourselves.

The seventy-two people who were sent by Jesus were not going on some barnstorming tour. They were going to where people lived, not just for an overnight visit

or a whistle-stop preaching event, but to build relationships that would be the foundation for the message of the Gospel. We are going to get the best reception to our message of the grace of God from people that we have a relationship with, and who have seen something in us that they want to know about. Then we get to tell the story – the story of what it means to me to be in relationship with the God who loves us so. This same approach to ministry is seen over and over in Paul’s missionary journeys – ministry built on relationships.

Those who received the messengers received the blessing of peace that is at the heart of the Gospel – the ultimate peace that is life in right relationship with God. The message of peace goes hand-in-hand with the proclamation that follows that “the kingdom of God is near you”. For people in right relationship with God, that proclamation is cause for rejoicing; for people outside of that relationship, the reign of the kingdom of God is cause for fear. People who received the messengers were practicing the hospitality that we should all be practicing – embracing the people of God and the Word of God and allowing the peace of God to become real in and for us.

At the beginning, we find these seventy-two people, people who were not in the inner circle of the twelve disciples, but who had recognized their place in the delivery of the message of the Gospel, being sent out with a purpose. They were going out for the harvest, not on a vacation, but to work in the kingdom of God. It was not going to be easy. They were going to face hardship and rejection. They were going to have to be focused and intentional and purposeful. And Jesus told them to travel light. This was an urgent mission. There was no time to pack, and no need for all the baggage that we tend to want to carry. Jesus had given the disciples the same instruction when he sent them out to do this work.

There is a great lesson for us right here, and it has nothing to do with the size of our suitcases. For the people of God to be effective workers – harvesters – for the kingdom of God, we have to ditch the baggage. We have to throw off and throw away all those things that are not God’s things, all those ways that are not God’s ways, the load of guilt and the burden of sin and the life that is not life in relationship with God, and learn



to travel light. Jesus promised us that if we would yoke ourselves to Him, our burden would be light, no matter how heavy we thought it was before. God will meet our every need, and He has no use for our baggage.

These are important lessons for us as inheritors of the Great Commission. Rejoice in the real prize that is abundant and eternal life in right relationship with God. Build relationships with people so you can not just tell them about God, but show them. God did not just tell us what it meant to be in right relationship with Him; He showed us in the life of Jesus Christ. And travel light, freed by the grace of God from all that weighs you down and distracts you from the goal of life.

The Word of God for the people of God.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.