

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Third Sunday after Trinity, July, 10, 2011**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 421, 401, 423, 409, 400.

Lessons: Proverbs 8:32-36, 1 Corinthians 9:2-23, Matthew 28:18-20.

Sermon Text: Luke 10:1-20.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehltrittter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Just before our text, Luke reports that several men wanted to follow Jesus, and Jesus extended invitations to another to follow him, but they all wanted to follow Jesus on their own terms. One said *"I will follow you wherever you go."* Jesus replied, *'Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.'* He said to another man, *'Follow me.'* But the man replied, *'Lord, first let me go and bury my father.'* Jesus said to him, *'Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.'* Still another said, *'I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family.'* Jesus replied, *'No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.'*" Luke 9:57-62

Then comes our text, when Jesus appointed 72 men to go ahead of him. Jesus gives them the command to do his work. In this we see a picture of our calling to prepare the way in men's hearts for Jesus' second coming. Listen as

**JESUS SENDS MEN OUT TO PREACH THE TRUTH**

- 1. The harvest is great, the work important.**
- 2. Proclaim Jesus gladly, whatever happens!**

*"After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go."* The reason Jesus sent men ahead of him *"to every town and place where he was about to go"* is plain. *"He told them, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.'"* Those words also fit the times we are living in.

We don't know about the education and training of these six dozen men for their work. Surely they didn't have years of college and seminary in order to go and prepare the way for Jesus, telling others who he is and what he came to earth for. But they knew who Jesus was and what he came for.

Some Greek manuscripts have 70 as the number appointed, as the King James Version reads. Others have 72 as you heard from the New International Version. But the exact number makes no difference. These men were appointed in addition to the Twelve whom He had called as His apostles. The principal difference between the work of the two groups seems to have been that the seventy had only a temporary commission, the work of preparing the way for Him in places where the Lord was relatively unknown. Jesus sent them two by two, for companionship and to help one another. They went as special messengers, to prepare the people for the appearance of the Christ. He had them take note of the towns and places where He planned to go. Christ may not have intended to visit all the small villages personally, but He wanted the announcement to go before Him that the great Prophet of Galilee, the Savior of Israel, was drawing near to their area. Knowing this, every one who was concerned about the Messiah could come in person and see and hear Him. The need for Jesus was great, just as it is today. The harvest was great: there were many thousands of people in need of redemption. And so there was great need of men fit to take part in the work of preaching the Kingdom. This has been true at all times since the days of Jesus, and will continue to be true till the end of time. In every country there are

millions of souls still sitting in darkness under the shadow of death. And in the so-called Christian countries the proportion of professing Christians is very small.

One wonders how many thousands of towns and small cities in our country are without any preaching of the true Gospel. The 2010 national meeting of the Presbyterian Church USA shows how far one of the largest churches claiming to be Christian has strayed from the truth of God's Word. Among the most publicized of that church body's activities was the acceptance of openly homosexual clergy. They also debated but did not pass a measure to change the church's definition of marriage to include unions of homosexuals. They also debated and adopted a 172 page report which includes an appeal "to end U.S. aid to Israel unless the country stops settlement expansions in disputed Palestinian territories." [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/07/09/presbyterians-end-usisrae\\_n\\_641663.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/07/09/presbyterians-end-usisrae_n_641663.html) These actions were sent to local churches and groups of churches called "presbyteries" for approval. But we must be reminded that the first and most important work of Christ's church on earth must be to prepare men for eternity by preaching the pure gospel of Jesus Christ.

Jesus sent these 72 out to preach that true, pure gospel. We, too, must "***Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.***" This must be the earnest prayer of all sincere Christians that God would send forth laborers into His harvest, that He would make many men willing to heed His call, and that many others take upon themselves the privilege of supplying these workers with the supplies for maintaining life while attending to these duties. We pray that many may say with the hymn writer "Here am I, send me, send me!"

Jesus then gave specific instructions for these missionaries. "***Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.***" The reason for not taking baggage along is immediately stated. They are to rely upon the gifts of those who hear their message, the gospel of eternal salvation which Jesus is coming to give to them. They are to be single-minded along the way, and not to get distracted into just sharing empty greetings.

Their calling is the business of the King; and the business of the King requires haste. The Lord plainly tells them that their position would resemble that of lambs in the midst of wolves. They should know from the start that their helplessness was absolute, so far as their own strength was concerned. The enemies that would arise to fight against them would be so much mightier than they that 'with might of theirs could naught be done'. Their one trust should be the Lord and His protection. They were not to carry a purse; they were not to follow the methods of the itinerant prophets and have a beggar's sack on the shoulder; they should not even take sandals with them, the heavy sandals used for journeys. They should be intent upon their business.

"***When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you. Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house. When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you.'***" Jesus gives them some specific things to look for and things to do. They are first to offer "peace". That was a common Jewish greeting, sometimes even heard today with the word "Shalom".

Theirs was to be a 'house mission'. With the greeting of peace, as the first words spoken, they should enter into every house. If any one living there were to welcome them, then their peace would rest upon such a person; but if they were not welcomed, the blessing of the peace would return to him that offered it. In addition, the missionaries should not scout around from house to house, looking for the best boarding-place, but should remain in the house where they first entered. And there they should eat and drink the food and drink which belonged to the people of the house as though it were their own. For, Christ says, the laborer is worthy of his hire; their food and keep was their "wages".

They are told simply to accept what has been offered to provide for their living. This has long been the way of the true visible church. Servants of the Lord have often been poorly provided for, and it seems that that is often the case in the history of conservative or orthodox Lutheran churches. On the other hand, perhaps you have heard stories of churches asking, calling, or more often than not, trying to "hire" someone to serve them as a pastor who makes excessive earthly demands – candidates for their pastors who seem more concerned about money or living conditions than accepting what the Lord offers. But we must also remember Jesus' words "***the worker deserves his wages***", "***the labourer is worthy of his hire.***" Paul echoes the idea that workers in the

church are to be provided for in 1 Timothy 5:17-18: *"The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, 'Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain,' and 'The worker deserves his wages.'"* Even though he himself made a point to support himself by his ten-making skills, Paul emphasizes that those who serve in the church are to be provided for.

*"But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God is near.'"* What was said of individual houses is now repeated for entire cities. Wherever the reception was kind and in accordance with the dignity of their calling, there they should remain, eating the things that were set before them. They should be content with what the people provided. A pastor will always be glad to share the poverty of his parishioners, just as the parishioners should always be glad to share their wealth with their pastor. The work of the 72 is then briefly identified as to heal the sick and to announce the coming of the kingdom of God in the person of Jesus. For every one who accepts Christ by faith enters into this Kingdom. The invitation was extended to them all. But if the disciples should be refused admission into some town or its houses, they should make it clear that in rejecting the messengers they despised the Master. Jesus says *"He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me."* Leaving the houses which did not welcome them and going into the streets, they should deliberately wipe off the very dust that had been taken up by their feet since entering the town. This was the most expressive gesture of absolute rejection. The people of that city should know that the kingdom of God was near them, that they were offered an opportunity of accepting it, and that it was their own fault if it had come to them in vain. Solemnly Jesus declares that the fault of such a city in despising the Gospel would outrank the transgressions of Sodom, and would be thus treated on the Day of Judgment.

Then we read that *"The seventy-two returned with joy and said, 'Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.'"* Then Jesus *"replied, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.'"* Jesus had seen Satan falling from heaven. As a bolt of lightning comes down from heaven in shining glory and disappears on earth, so the splendid power of Satan was thrust down out of heaven. The devil and his angels are spirits, invisible to men. Their destruction appears as a falling from heaven. In the disciples' casting out of the evil spirits the destruction of the power of Satan is illustrated. Christ Himself, as the stronger, had come upon the strong, had overcome and bound him. The entire life of Christ, from birth to burial and resurrection was a victory over Satan. And this victory is shared with the disciples of Jesus. He gave them power, even if all the devils of hell seek to overcome it.

Jesus tells them, don't rejoice at your power, but rejoice in the grace of God that has been given to you. The thing that the happiness of the Christians rests upon is founded upon the fact that their names are written in the book of eternal life in heaven. That is the glorious certainty of believers, that they know God has chosen them from the beginning unto salvation, and prepared everlasting mansions for them. This fact must remain uppermost in a Christian's life, and it will keep him from putting his trust in his own gifts and works. We fight against the powers of darkness. But through it all, as we tell of the coming Christ and what he has done for mankind, we are doing the will of God. May he give us strength to be his true witnesses. Amen.