

'The
kingdom
of God has
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Luke 10:1-24

“The Kingdom of God has Come Near to You”

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Luke 10:1-24 After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. 2 Then He said to them, "The harvest truly is

great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. 3 "Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves. 4 "Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals; and greet no one along the road. 5 "But whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house.' 6 "And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on it; if not, it will return to you. 7 "And remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not go from house to house. 8 "Whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you. 9 "And heal the sick there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' 10 "But whatever city you enter, and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, 11 'The very dust of your city which clings to us we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near you. 12 "But I say to you that it will be more tolerable in that Day for Sodom than for that city. 13 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. 14 "But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. 15 "And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades. 16 "He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me." 17 Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name." 18 And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19 "Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. 20 "Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." 21 In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. 22 "All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him." 23 Then He turned to His disciples and said privately, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see; 24 "for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not seen it, and to hear what you hear, and have not heard it."

Over the past few weeks, Jesus has greatly challenged us to consider some uncomfortable questions concerning our personal lives, our corporate 'body-life' duties, as well as the honest evaluation of our salvation standing before our Creator. Most folks quite simply will never look into that scary basket, for fear of what they might find. Sadly, ignorance will be no excuse when we stand before the judge. Today, Jesus questions another aspect of our faith...one that also serves well to reflect who and what we really are despite any verbal argument to the contrary.

In this passage Christ is "sending out" those who received from Him. This event for each of us is a surety and is non-negotiable. Each and every reborn child of God will be "sent." Perhaps to some far away developing country somewhere, or somewhere more local, but *we have been saved FOR something*: not merely to gain eternal life and abundant present blessings. As we mentioned previously the quote by Charles Spurgeon, where he said "Every Christian is either a missionary or an imposter." Everything that Jesus ever said and everything the New Testament ever records reflects this great truth. A profound truth that has seemingly been vastly lost in the church age in which we live.

Sadly, it seems those who follow false god's and lying faiths, are quite willing to sacrifice and give of themselves and their lives, and thus false doctrine spreads while Christianity declines and atrophies. It is the modern manifest of the "us four and no more" priority system, and it is categorically contrary to scriptural Christianity! The oft unspoken truth is that Christianity in America has so reinvented itself that it is often not even remotely similar to the life of Christianity so prescribed in scripture. It has become a verbally moralistic republican social club rather than the army of faithful messengers that are being sent out here in this passage. Romans 12:1 "*And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will accept. When you think of what he has done for you, is this too much to ask?*"

Most of us within the greater church are willing to give a little, but certainly this passage as well as others of this nature tend to cause us to shrink back in a major fashion! Because God tends to get our *surplus* rather than what He in fact requires...which is our *first fruits*. This means that after we pay for all that we need and then buy all that we want, God may get a part of what is left of our monthly finances. It means that because we are busy people and have a lot of obligations, we will always do those **first** and if everything works out we will attend, participate, and serve within the time frame we have left over. It's as if Jesus essentially gets the 'floor sweepings' of our lives, and in truth even that is a struggle for many of us.

There has always been and will always be the "bucking" on both sides of the isle when it comes to the 'going out' ...the sacrificial living forth of faith, sacrifice and evangelism. Many will refuse to go and many will refuse to hear the ones that do. But **both** of these people groups will suffer under the judgement of such rejection! Like the church in America, and certainly this particular one we attend today, we all have been profoundly blessed by the personal presence of God and have seen His miracles in our midst.

The Kingdom of God has indeed 'come near to us.' How blessed we are! Lives have been redeemed here and lives have been restored! How many of us have found jobs, bought houses and cars, traveled on missions, been given children, and have been so blessed with great friends? We are not alone in such restoration and heavenly generosity! But despite this, most of us will take all we are given and will still reject His ultimate authority over our lives, and negate His priority IN our lives, and for that, the penalty is extreme. Jesus pronounced "woa" upon Chorazin and Capernaum. Chorazin today is merely ruins. And Capernaum, *after being literally lost for 1500 years*, is today just an inconsequential little fishing village virtually void of believers. Billy Graham once mentioned that "*If God doesn't punish America, He'll have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah.*"

Firstly, in the response to our calling...the manifest of our created purpose, we are called to quell the natural restless spirit within us. Jesus tells his disciples to 'stay put' unless there is a rejection of the message...a full-on rejection of **CHRIST**. Certainly this seeming nuance is far from inconsequential. We have, in our natural state, a very unsettled and anxious spirit about us. For the religious church attendee that is not truly reborn, that restlessness is due to the fact that they "still haven't found what they're looking for." For the born again disciple it can occur because we are still apt to be distracted by the world and certainly poked by Satan. Perhaps too it's just because this is ultimately not our home.

But Jesus is saying "settle in" and invest in your work. 1 Thessalonians 4:10-12 says "*But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more; that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing.*" Certainly I have recognized that such is an issue...more so at peak times of the year when Satan comes especially hard against us. One of those times has historically been right now through the end of May...the "Mission's season." More people historically leave during this period than any other time of the year. It's a sucker punch, but 'being blind' is essential to a sucker punch.

The 'penalty' for those who would reject these men and their message was harsh. But He was not speaking of a judgement that was universal, but rather for a Jewish nation that should clearly have known better. They were aware of the scriptures and the prophecies. Just like it is for us today: *with greater knowledge comes greater responsibility and accountability as to what we do with such*. Therefore, there will indeed be greater judgement and harsher penalty for those of us here that reject Him! Frankly, many of us will find ourselves like the third man in the parable of the talents. He not only buried what the master had given him to invest on His behalf, but when finally confronted on the matter he actually tried to put the blame *on* that master! "*Oh...I knew you were a hard man...so I... out of fear, failed to do what you asked...failed to invest it for you.*"

The man in the parable had been in the presence of the master. Israel had been in the presence of the Messiah. And we have been in the presence of the glory of the Holy Spirit in the midst of us here. Ahhh...the "kingdom of God has come near to us" just as it had to them, and we all are without excuse! Israel had had God so greatly manifested in their history...repeatedly rescued from bondage, freed from slavery, overcoming their enemies, and had been greatly favored.

The second factor to make note of herein, is that Jesus empowered them for the calling. Let's face it: *these guys didn't naturally have the ability to do these things*. Matthews's version of this account gives us a greater detail as to the mission: "*Preach the Word...heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons.*" These tasks were impossible for the mere mortal man! But the "kingdom of God had come near to them." They had touched His glory and "tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come." (Heb 6:5) Thus Jesus told them "Give as freely as you have received." (Matthew 10:8 NLT) They had been greatly given and now Jesus was asking them to greatly give in return. We as His children were never to be the end of the story, but rather the conduit of His blessing and the hands and feet of His work on this earth. It's not that He had to do things this way, but by doing so he "killed two birds with one stone." He furthered His kingdom in the manifest of His love and grace upon others, and grew us upward and onward in maturity...on towards the apex of our purpose and calling.

Thirdly, while He empowered them, He did not pave the way. The boys didn't fly first class and stay in 5 star hotels. They had essentially nothing earthly. They were instructed to "*Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals...*" They were to trust in God for everything, even their daily needs. All was supplied for them, **but for the purpose of reciprocity**: to do His ministry and further His kingdom! And if it is the kingdom we enjoy and experience then it goes without saying that He is "the king." We can't have a kingdom without a king. *Kings don't demand belief or faith. You don't believe in kings. No, you obey kings. You give a king allegiance. So when the kingdom comes the proper response is behavioral, a reconfiguration of loyalties. A new apocalyptic reality has been revealed and we are called upon to readjust our lives to this new reality.* (- Richard Beck)

Luke 17 tells us that the "kingdom of God is among you." We are in it believer. Isaiah 41:9-10 says "*I have called you back from the ends of the earth, saying, 'You are my servant.' For I have chosen you and will not throw you away. Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.*" Awesome words of grace and strength! But please remember believer, He is addressing His **servants**. Servanthood is the response He saved us for. That is the response of one who recognizes that the "kingdom of God has come near to us." *The decisive battle against sin and Satan and sickness and death has been fought and won by the King in his death and resurrection, but the war is not over. Sin must be fought, Satan must be resisted, sickness must be prayed over and groaned under (Romans 8:23), and death must be endured until the second coming of the King and the consummation of the kingdom.* (- John Piper)

Today we stand in the presence of the Creator of the universe. The king has come. He is present here, and has chosen those of us that are truly His. He has favored us with this community and gifted us with so much spiritually and earthly. We are alive, and experiencing His presence every day. Do we have a handle on that fact? Do we truly understand what we have as His children? The power to change the world! How then shall we live? How can we continue to live as we did before? How can we not set down the minor things of this world and its comforts for the joy of manifesting that kingdom and pleasing the king?

Jesus warned these disciples, 70 plus of them at this point, not to let this favor and position go to their head. It wasn't about them, it was about **Him**. Matthew 10:25 says *"It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master."* They were apt to do as we often do, and allow this 'place'...this realm, to be taken for granted and thus easily squandered on selfish gain and lazy ease, instead of an opportunity to participate in the very miraculous of God! How we love the life in the kingdom, but how we shun the costs and the sacrifices that are required. Jesus sent out 70 at this point, but it seems so very many of these...even having *'tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come'* (Hebrews 6:5), would later abandon Him when the going got tough and the cost too great. *"From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him."* (John 6:66)

Such a concept as a king and kingdom can be at times truthfully somewhat troubling for us here in America. For us living in a democracy and celebrating democracy the way we do in America, celebrating freedom the way we do and wanting to export it all over the planet, celebrating the concept of individual rights and freedom the way we do, embracing a king and a kingdom can be a stretch. We love the idea of individual rights and personal freedoms to such a degree that even as Christians we are reluctant to give it up. And it is that ground where the battle rages even today within believers and the greater church as a whole. In that passage of John 6 we read from, the people complained about what Jesus was teaching, and said *"This is a hard saying..."* But this is HIS kingdom and rule. God does not solicit anyone's opinions. God does not do referendums. God does not have focus groups. God does not take polls.

Christian...we are in the presence of something and someone fabulous. Should not our manifest of such be equally fabulous? Should not this presence of God in our midst be the center of everything we do, and everything we are? *The greatest form of government, the purest form of government, the best form of government is a monarchy with a perfect King who is always just, who's perfectly benevolent, ...perfectly just, perfectly wise, perfectly powerful, and perfectly everything else. And that's the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God has come, folks, and those of us who know Christ are in it. We are in it and the Lord Jesus Christ is our King.* (John MacArthur)

Luke 9:23 *Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. The King has come believer. We aren't finished here yet, but the king is with us. The kingdom of God has come near to us. "Blessed are the eyes that see what you have seen. I tell you, many prophets and kings longed to see what you see, but they didn't see it. And they longed to hear what you hear, but they didn't hear it."*

Oh, may we live lives that reflect it...