

**Text: Luke 10:1-20**

<sup>1</sup>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. <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. <sup>4</sup>Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road. <sup>5</sup>"When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' <sup>6</sup>If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you. <sup>7</sup>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. <sup>8</sup>"When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. <sup>9</sup>Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you.' <sup>10</sup>But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, <sup>11</sup>'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.' <sup>12</sup>I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town. <sup>13</sup>"Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. <sup>14</sup>But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. <sup>15</sup>And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. <sup>16</sup>"He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me." <sup>17</sup>The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." <sup>18</sup>He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. <sup>19</sup>I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. <sup>20</sup>However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." (NIV)

***Theme: Is America Listening?***

In today's text Jesus sends out 72 of His disciples to prepare His way. He sends them into the towns and villages that He would soon visit with the message, "*The kingdom of God is near.*" One of the things that Jesus told them reminded me of some of my own experiences. He told them, "*Eat whatever is put before you.*" For them that might have meant some unclean foods that good Jews generally would not eat. Throughout my ministry, I have often been served things that I probably would not have normally eaten. When I did a short practicum in Germany, I was once served warm blood sausage for lunch. It was the grossest thing I have ever eaten, but I did eat it. Recently I have gotten to know a lot of new foods from our Hmong and French African members.

These people were sent to preach the Gospel. Would anyone listen to them? But the bigger question for us that I would like to look at today is whether America is listening God's word is preached to us.

I. We have had the privilege of God's Word being preached to our nation from its inception.

The reason why many of the first immigrants came to this nation was to freely practice their faith. Groups such as the puritans and the pilgrims had some strange beliefs which no one follows today, but they came to this land to freely practice their faith. A Quaker himself, William Penn set up a colony in Pennsylvania where a number of persecuted groups came because He promised religious freedom.

In the mid 1800's many of our Lutheran forefathers also came to this country seeking religious freedom. The German government had combined the Lutheran and Reformed churches and

developed the hymnals, liturgies, and baptism, wedding, funeral, and communion services that congregations were required to use. Pastors who tried to continue with Lutheran services were deposed from their congregations and even imprisoned. Thousands of people left their homeland to move to a wilderness in this country, so that they could freely practice their Lutheran faith. They came to places like Buffalo, New York, Perry County and St. Louis, Missouri, and Freistadt, Wisconsin, which is today in Mequon. In addition other Lutherans came to this country in order to bring the Gospel to the native Americans. They settled in various places in Michigan, especially in the Saginaw valley. There were many other people who came to this country to economic reasons. They just wanted to make a better life for themselves. Circuit riders, preachers on horseback, went to form congregations in these new towns. New congregations were formed and churches were built throughout our towns and countryside.

By God's grace our country is full of church steeples. God's Word is freely preached in our nation every single Sunday. In that Word Christ also comes to us. The Civil War song "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," says, "**His truth is marching on.**" The truth of the Gospel has come to us as it marches throughout the world. The question for us is whether we let it pass through without receiving the blessings that it brings.

## II. Have we listened?

There are many examples of how that Gospel is being rejected by us today. There are the crass examples: Today those who believe the 10 commandments are called immoral. We are against "marriage equality." We are against giving mothers the choice to kill their children in the womb. Last week a Texas legislator was called a hero for holding a filibuster against a law which would outlaw abortions past 20 weeks, a point in which a child in the womb is fully developed and definitely feels pain. We no longer live in a society with no morals. Today our world is saying that it is the Bible and Ten Commandments that are wrong. Another example that I heard this week was that the Freedom of Religion Foundation brought a lawsuit against one of the Milwaukee Ethnic Festivals. You will notice that you no longer will get in free to the festivals if you attend the Sunday service. The "Freedom of Religion" group sued for discrimination and won. Those are some crass examples, but there are even more tempting ways to let the Gospel pass by. Sunday morning is becoming so full with other activities that it is often hard to fit worship of our Lord in our schedule. It's hard to find time for families to eat or pray together or have devotions. We can be so preoccupied with so many things in life, that the Gospel passes by without us even noticing.

If those 72 disciples were to come to our city and our homes today, would they have shaken the dust off of their feet because no one listened? Jesus pronounced "woes" to those cities that rejected the Gospel. He even said that it would be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgement than for those cities. God's Word's has been preached to us. If we reject the message of God's love and forgiveness to us in Christ, our punishment will be greater than for those who have never heard the Gospel. People often ask, "What about those who have never heard?" What we should concentrate on however is that those of us who have had opportunity to hear the Gospel are careful that we do not reject that Good News when it is shared with us.

But how blessed it is when we listen to that blessed Gospel of Christ. The 72 returned with joy. Even the devil himself submitted to Jesus' name. The Lord said that He saw Satan fall from heaven

like lightning. Then He said that He gave His disciples authority to overcome all of the power of the devil. The Gospel has the power of the Holy Spirit. The devil tries as hard as he can to thwart the Gospel's power, but in every place where the Gospel marches on, people come to faith that Jesus Christ is their Savior.

Can you imagine what it must have been like for those disciples? Jesus said that He was sending them as lambs among wolves. He told them not to take a purse, a bag or an extra pair of sandals. They had no idea where they would stay or what they would eat. Yet they could not believe how well things turned out. They returned praising God. Jesus remarked that this was a great miracle, but they should especially praise God that their names are written in heaven.

It's that way for us too. With all of the opposition to the Gospel today and with all the temptations to seek the joys of this world and leave our Lord behind it is a miracle that anyone believes the Gospel and follows our Lord. We give God thanks for every person who comes to know Jesus as their Savior. But it is our special joy that our names are written in heaven. Faith in Jesus is the greatest gift that we have. We know that we are His, and He is ours, and nothing can ever separate us from His love. He shed His blood on the cross for the forgiveness of all of our sins. He made us into God's beloved children in baptism. The devil might try to overcome us, but He never will. Our Lord defends us from every evil, and brings true joy to our lives. The 72 prepared the way for Jesus. You can imagine the joy of the people in those towns and villages when Jesus arrived. They were able to see their Savior face to face. We also look forward to that blessed day when the Lord will call us to Himself, and we will see our Savior face to face.

III. I would like to make one more comment on this text. Jesus says, "Pray for workers."

I have now been a pastor for 25 years, and to be honest, I have a fair amount of fear for those pastors who are coming out of the seminary today. Morally our world has changed a lot in the last 25 years to the degree that the 10 Commandments are not just mocked, they are condemned. There is more apathy than ever. Churches throughout our country are struggling. Look at what has happened to so many of our churches in this city. It looks like those who take up our Lord's calls are being sent as lambs among the wolves today. Yet, just like the 72 the Lord always gives His word success. The pastoral office is always challenging. The devil himself opposes us every step of the way. But God's power and peace are always there. In the end, it is a great joy to serve as a preacher of our Lord's Word. Pray that young men will listen and follow when our Lord calls them to work in His harvest fields.

Is America listening today? To be honest, we have a lot to be concerned about. It seems as if our Lord's word is mocked and rejected more than ever before. We should pray for our country that God's Word will bring peace and joy rather than judgement. Pray that God will call more workers into His harvest field, and listen to that word when it comes to you that you will have the salvation which the Gospel brings to you.

Amen.

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