

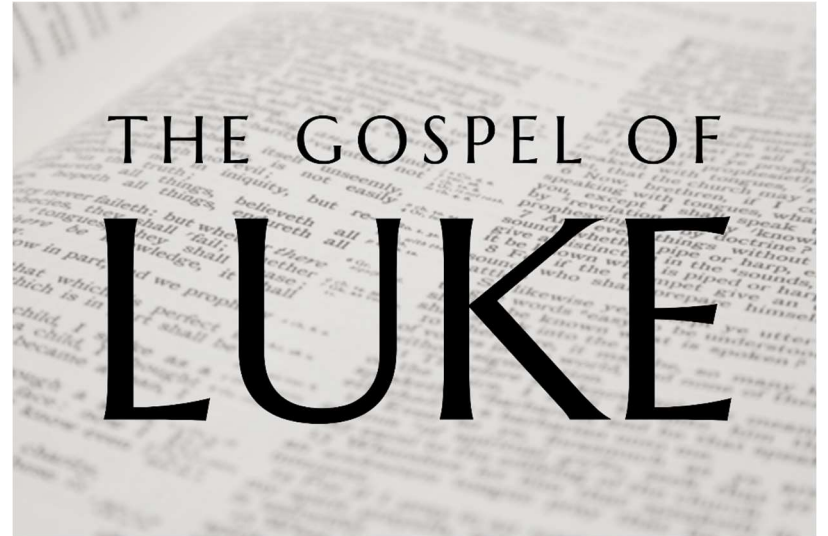
unaddressed. When that happened, both a verbal and visible response was required, because rejection of the gospel is no light matter. They are to take nothing from that community, not even the dust on their sandals. The bottom line is that rejectors of the gospel draw down upon themselves the judgement of God. The gravity of which is declared with the voice of authority, "I tell you". And it is defined in devastating terms by way of comparison with Sodom. Reading Genesis 19:23-29 is frightening.

To think that, come the Day of Judgement, it will be more bearable for the inhabitants of Sodom than the inhabitants of villages, towns and cities who reject the gospel, is a very sobering truth.

Q1. What does Jesus tell the men when he sends them out, about what they are to do and what they are to take?

Q2. What will be the consequence for those who reject the gospel, come the Day of Judgement?

FAMILY WORSHIP BOOKLET



God tells us that Ezra read from the book of the Law,
day after day, and that the people of God
were filled with joy!

Friday - Luke 10:1-12 – The harvesters are sent out!

V3. As we have seen previously in Luke, the use of the word 'behold' is an indication of the shocking nature of what Jesus is about to say. Who in their right mind would ever think of sending lambs into a pack of wolves? And yet, that is exactly what Jesus is saying he is doing to these seventy-two men. Every servant who is sent into the harvest is exposed in the same way. The attacks upon ministers and their families are real and serious at times. However, they can be withstood, but only in the name and by the power of Christ. Apart from Christ, none of his lambs are safe.

V6-7. The instructions to the seventy-two are different but of a similar nature to those given previously to the Twelve (Luke 9:3-5). The thinking is the same; this is a matter of urgency and trust/dependency. Urgency in getting the message out, and trust not merely in the message the Lord has given them, but also in his ability to provide for them. That is the challenge of our lives – to trust the Lord. To trust that Christ will reap the harvest, as the gospel is proclaimed, and to trust in His provision while we engage in the reaping of that harvest. The church too often fails in either one or both of these areas. We need to be constantly schooling ourselves about the power of the gospel and the King's provision. We need to exhort one another, that Christ will build his church as his Word is faithfully preached, and that we don't need to be sitting as a church with tens of thousands of dollars in the bank for a 'rainy day'.

V8. Jesus' command to announce, "Peace be to this house!" is not merely an instruction to remember to be polite when entering a home. It is much more than that. This "peace" is an objective gift given by God to the inhabitants of that home. Specifically, it is the gift of the hearing of the gospel. To those who will receive it by God's grace, it will bring eternal true peace with God. Rejection of this free offer of the gospel will result in absence of peace. Again, as with the Twelve, the instruction is given to stay in the home where they are welcome and not move about from home to home. They are to be provided for by those receiving the gospel, but they are not to abuse that. How much the health and wealth 'leeches' of our time must be an anathema to Jesus.

V9. The task of those sent out by Jesus was always the same – heal the sick and proclaim the good news of the Kingdom, and the response was always the same. There are fields, hearts, where the seed takes root and produces a harvest forthcoming. And there are fields, hearts, where the seed is rejected, and when that happens it cannot go

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Thursday - Luke 10:1-4 – The harvest awaits!

Luke now records that Jesus sent out seventy-two men to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God. As with the Twelve, they go in twos. Before we get into what Jesus tells them, I want to make a couple of brief observations. First, given what we considered this week about what it takes to be a follower of Jesus, it is noteworthy that these seventy-two men were in a position to be sent out. It is an indication that many do, by the grace of God, get what is involved in such following. Second, these men are to go into "every town and place" where Jesus is about to go, which tells us something about the amount of work that lies ahead of Jesus. These thirty-six groups of men were to cover the same ground as Jesus would subsequently cover himself. When following Jesus, no one is asked to do more than what Jesus did himself.

V2. "The harvest is plentiful..." is a well-known verse. It's a saying that Jesus used in different forms. He had said it when John the Baptist was still alive (John 4:35). He also said it before sending out the Twelve (Matthew 9:37). Obviously, this issue of harvesting was frequently on Jesus' mind throughout his ministry. Yes, the sowing needs to be done, and that can be hard gruelling work, but it is work that always has an end – the harvest (Psalm 126:5,6). And what a harvest it is, as the elect are called out throughout all ages. It is a harvest that is huge in scale, humanly incalculable in number, as numerous as the stars in the heavens and the sand on the seashore. We tend to look at the church now, and she appears weak and insignificant, yet we must also remember, that the Bride will one day be presented to the one who redeemed her with His own blood as a glorious, radiant, and vast community.

The other striking aspect of what Jesus says concerns the 'fewness' of the workers. It is immediately followed by the command to pray to God for more harvesters. Literally, 'beg the Lord of the harvest to throw more workers into the field.' This prayer is to be engaged with earnestness. It is directed to the Lord because He is the one who owns and controls all things, and the ingathering of this great harvest of the ages has been placed solely into the hands of Jesus. So, it is Jesus, and Jesus alone, who can and will provide the men to do the harvesting. It is Jesus who sends out men with the message that they are to proclaim in his voice, and it is Jesus who prays for the ingathering of his elect lambs. We must pray that our hearts will be joined with God's desire in this.

Q1. How many workers does Jesus send out?

Q2. What does Jesus tell us to pray for and why?

Monday – Luke 9:57-62 – Following Christ – what's the cost!

Although we considered this verses last Friday, because of the content we are going to look at them again for a few days this week.

As they are travelling, a scribe (Matthew 8:19) offers to follow Jesus wherever he will go. What a wonderful statement of commitment. Exactly the type of investment of one's life that Jesus was seeking. It is a perfect example of the type of commitment that the church so desperately needs today. For too frequently the comment is, 'I'll see what I can do, when I get the chance, and if nothing else needs my attention'. A perfect example - Yes and No. You note that Jesus neither accepts nor declines the man's offer. Instead, he goes to the heart of the issue. Certainly, the offer to follow is great, but only so if it is made after serious consideration.

There is a cost to following Christ. There is always a cost to following Christ. There is always more of a cost than one thinks. Choosing to follow Christ is not to be entered into lightly and shouldn't be entered into without due consideration. In his response, Jesus speaks to that cost and in personal terms. Because of the daily demands of his work, Jesus frequently chose to forsake the comforts of his own home. It's not that he chose to live in squalid poverty; Jesus was well cared for in many ways by others. But he did deprive himself of an easier life, one marked by a greater degree of comfort, to fulfil the work that God had for him.

So, Jesus is saying to this man, and to us, 'you want to follow me, great, but are you prepared to make the necessary choices to do so? Choices which will mean that your personal comfort (and it's not simply about sleeping in your own bed, the application is much wider than that) will have to come second. Essentially, are you prepared to be all in?'

We are not told whether the man chose to follow Jesus or not. It would be interesting to know. The more important question, though, is where are you and I are at in our thinking when it comes to following Jesus? Have you considered whether your following is a matter of doing so in a way that accommodates personal comfort, or are you willing to 'sleep' wherever you are asked? On the face of it, it may seem a relatively straightforward and simple question to answer, but I encourage you to take time to think about it. The response you give will have a huge impact on your usefulness in the Kingdom of God.

Q1. What did the scribe offer to do?

Q2. How did Jesus respond?

Q3. Why did Jesus answer in this way?

Tuesday - Luke 9:57-62 – Following Christ – let me go first and...

Whereas the scribe had taken the initiative and said to Jesus that he was going to follow him, this time it is Jesus who asks a man to follow him, literally, 'be following me'. While the scribe was keen and had to be cautioned to consider the cost of following, this man is over-cautious and wants to delay making a decision.

His request to go and bury his dead father has been taken up by commentators in two ways. Some say that the man is saying that he must wait until his father dies before he can commit, so is simply prevaricating.

The other explanation is that the man's father had just died, and the man is asking what it says, to go home and bury him. Leon Morris writes, "The Jews counted proper burial as most important. The duty of burial took precedence over the study of the Law, the Temple service, the killing of the Passover sacrifice, the observance of circumcision and the reading of the Megillah." (The Megillah was the scroll, which refers to one of five books of the Old Testament, namely Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther, and is read on certain Jewish special days.) So burial was a big thing in Jewish culture, as it is in ours.

Surely, given that, this is a credible request to make, and Jesus is bound to agree to it. However, Jesus' response says otherwise. 'Let others bury your father.' 'Let those who do not understand the nature and worth of the kingdom of God attend to such affairs.' 'Let your concern be about matters of eternal significance, about heaven.' And so, Jesus charges the man, "go and proclaim the kingdom of God." The call to bury one's father is among the strongest anyone can experience, but for Jesus the call to serve in the Kingdom of God supersedes everything, without exception, and for good reason - not everyone has been called to it.

The church needs men and women who understand this. The idea of voluntarism has engulfed the life of the Bride. The norm is 'commitment as it suits', leading to what I would call 'convenience participation and service'. It's the fault of leaders who feel that they need to pander to people to keep them on board and so fail to address thinking that says – the church should count itself 'lucky' that I do as much as I do. Christ knew none of this. He gave his all, in obedience to the Father.

- Q1. What is the difference in this situation from yesterdays?
- Q2. Did the man's reason for not committing to follow Jesus appear to be a good one?
- Q3. How did Jesus respond?

Wednesday - Luke 9:57-62 – Following Christ - I will follow you.

Like the scribe who offered to follow Jesus, this man does likewise, but with the request that he goes home and sorts out his affairs first. Again, not an unreasonable request. One could argue that, in fact, it is a prudent one, given how Jesus had responded to the scribe.

The problem is that, often, it simply doesn't work. When this man goes home and tells his family what his intentions are, he's going to be confronted with any number of reasons why he shouldn't do what he is suggesting, even though it is highly commendable. And when presented with those reasons, he is going to find it hard to follow through on his stated commitment. People tend not to let those whom they love to leave easily.

Family and friends are a wonderful part of our life, but, too often, those whom we love the most can actually be the greatest hindrance to our doing what we should for the Lord. They have their reasons, and sometimes they may be legitimate reasons, but when set beside the clear call of Christ upon our lives they should nonetheless amount to nothing. Jesus' response states that succinctly. Our focus should be on the task in hand, and we should be looking forward to what Christ will do in and through us, for the good of others in His Bride and His glory.

I have a lot to give my parents thanks for. But the thing I am most thankful for is the fact that they have always let me go to serve the Lord. From my teenage years, they have constantly said to me, 'go and be about the King's business'. When I got the Call to become the minister in Ottawa, I remember travelling to Northern Ireland to tell my parents before I spoke to anyone else. I will never forget it. After I told them that I would be accepting it, there was silence, and then, with tears in his eyes, my father said, "son we love you and we will miss you, Heather and the weans (the children) but you go and serve the Lord as you have always done, with everything you have." I thank God that He blessed me with parents who have given me many things, but most of all, with the beautiful freedom to serve the Lord, wherever He has called me to go.

Then, of course, there is the task of patience persistence once one has responded with commitment. The church doesn't need excitable, enthusiastic, keen starters; it needs plodding, consistent finishers, and no more so than among ministers of God's Word.

- Q1. What did this man offer to do?
- Q2. What request did he make of Jesus first?
- Q3. What did Jesus tell him?