

Luke 10:1-12, 16-20

I'm feeling a bit **confused** today! Last week in our Gospel lesson we heard about three men who wanted to be disciples of Jesus. All three were **rejected**, but not for the same reason. The first man had said, "*I will follow You wherever You go.*" He was really pumped up with **energy**, and bubbling over with **enthusiasm**. But Jesus quickly **tempered** that eager enthusiasm by telling the man, "Following Me won't be easy. We have no place to **live**. There will be much **suffering** to endure, and we'll be **rejected** by many, and forced to **wander** from town to town." The man hadn't **thought** about all that before. He figured that he would just vigorously **cheer** on the sidelines - "go along for the **ride**" so to speak - and reap the **benefits** of following Jesus. As a result, Jesus **rejected** that man, because he had not considered the **cost** of discipleship.

On the other hand, the **other** two men were rejected because they weren't enthusiastic **enough!** Jesus wanted them to completely **leave behind** their former lives and to follow Him, without clinging to **temporal** things. They were rejected because they were **not willing** to do so. Now, while one man was rejected as a disciple because he was **too** willing, two others were rejected because they were not willing **enough**. That's where the confusion comes in. How do **we** know what to do? What's the magic formula for discipleship for which Jesus is looking? Unlike **most** miracle cures, this one actually comes in a **small capsule** - nevertheless, it's still difficult to **swallow!** Jesus says, "The formula is a double one. **Count The Cost, And Pay The Price.**"

Our text today makes it quite clear that **many** in Jesus' day, were willing to **follow** that formula. While Jesus had just rejected **three** disciples, here we find Him sending out **seventy two** others! These seventy two realized that Christian discipleship revolves around **service**. Of course we all lead **busy** lives. In meeting with the various committees of our congregation we all lament the same thing. There is **so much to do** at home and at work, that we keep falling farther and farther behind. That usually carries over into our work in the **church** as well. There is so much to be done, and so little time to do it. However, there is a solution to the time-shortage problem in the old saying which goes, "Many hands make light work." Jesus used that principle in our text today, by sending out seventy two workers. Will we also be able to fill the tremendous need for workers in God's kingdom today? If we **are** able, those workers will experience **positive** results.

Jesus shows us that because the end is **near** and time is **short** - **many** workers are needed, not just a **few**. Our text begins, "*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.*" Jesus did not intend that He and the Twelve would do **all** the work in His Kingdom. That would not only have been **unnecessary**, it would have been **foolish**. There were lots of **talented** people out there who wanted to make **use** of their talents in **servicing** their Lord. So, Jesus sent **thirty six teams** ahead, to take care of some of the **preliminary** work in the places He would be going. I'm sure there was still plenty left to do when Jesus and the Twelve arrived later.

We can apply this same principle to the Christian Church today. Jesus does not intend that the pastors and teachers should do **all** the work in His kingdom, but rather, that the work is to be **shared** by all - especially in some of the **preliminary** areas. I thank God often that He has placed me into a congregation where there are so many **willing** and **diligent** Kingdom workers. Yet, there is always a need for **more** workers - for Parish Planning council members and committee members, Sunday School and Vacation Bible School teachers and assistants, Pioneer leaders and assistants, as well as for volunteers in virtually every project which goes on in our congregation. There is truly a need for **many** workers in our congregation. Will we **find** those workers?

Actually, it's good for us to remember that Jesus didn't **stop** with seventy two workers. Our text says, "*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.'*" The many people whom Jesus sent out were instructed to **pray** that even **more** workers would be sent out. So, **prayer** was a part of their work. Prayer is a very **powerful** tool, and it is something which **every** Christian can and should put to good **use**. No matter if you are a child, or 110 years old, or somewhere in between - no matter if you are healthy, or flat on your back in the hospital - no matter what your position or station is in life, you can **pray** that God would send **more** workers into His harvest field. Notice that although everything in this effort depends on **God** for success, He accomplishes His work through **human** means. This is how one hymnwriter stated it: "*God has no hands but our hands, to do His work today. He has no feet but our feet, to lead men in the way. He has no tongue but our tongue, to tell men how He died. He has no help but our help, to bring them to His side.*" Being a **part** of that work is both an tremendous **privilege**, and an awesome **responsibility**!

Notice also that Jesus sent out the people in our text into a **dangerous** environment. He said, *“I am sending you out like **lambs** among **wolves**.”* Wolves are very **vicious** animals, and they are the natural **enemies** of sheep. So, that combination would seem to insure a state of utter **helplessness** and extreme **danger** for Jesus’ disciples. Even though they would be traveling in **pairs**, realistically speaking **two** sheep are just as helpless as **one** against an attack by a wolf. Why would Jesus expose His sheep to such **danger**? The answer lies in the first five words of our text, *“I am sending you out.”* Apart from **Jesus**, the dangers were **overwhelming**. But under the protecting hand and watchful eye of the Good Shepherd, they would be as safe as if they were back **home** in the sheepfold.

Jesus went on to explain to the seventy two that they could expect to receive mixed reactions from the people to whom He was sending them. He told them, *“He who **listens** to you listens to **Me**; he who **rejects** you rejects **Me**; but he who rejects **Me** rejects Him who **sent Me**.”* There’s good news and bad news in those words. Let’s look at the **bad** news first - there would be **rejection** - some would **not** listen to them. Not everybody would be **thrilled** about the fact that Jesus was coming to their town. There were those who **despised** Him. Others, who were perhaps interested at first, would grow **disinterested**, when they learned that Jesus was not coming to win support for an **earthly** kingdom. So, even though Jesus had sent out the seventy two, their message and work would be met with some **rejection**. The Gospel of Jesus clearly delineates who is **for** Him, and who is **against** Him.

However, the **good** news is that for the **most** part these seventy two disciples met with great **success** - there were many who **would** listen to them. They **preached**, they healed the **sick**, and to their own surprise they even cast out **demons!** Not bad - especially bearing in mind that they had just been sent ahead to **announce** that **Jesus** was on the way. But then, God had given many **other** heralds of the Savior outstanding abilities too - like the Old Testament prophets, and John the Baptist, and even the Angel Gabriel. **We** are very **impressed** with the successes of the seventy two, but Jesus **down-played** these temporal successes. He said, *“Do **not** rejoice that the **spirits** submit to you, but **rejoice** that your names are written in **heaven**.”*

It’s easy for **us** to forget that too, isn’t it! We **rejoice** that God has enabled us to serve Him with so many **talents**, or that we have been given so many **opportunities** to share the message of Jesus with others. Or, we **rejoice** that we

have a new **house**, or a new **car**, or a **job** promotion, or even an extra week's **vacation**. Certainly these earthly honors and accomplishments have their place. But what a **small** and **insignificant** place it is, when we compare them with the free gift of eternal life in **heaven**! Inheriting that gift is what our whole life is all about, and that is why we so willingly serve our Lord Jesus in every way we possibly can. May God grant that there will never be a **shortage** of workers in His kingdom - that there will not only be **seventy two** willing workers to send out, but that there will be **hundreds more** as well - and, that each of **us** will be counted **among** them. Amen.