

Luke 10: 1-12; Rom. 10: 14-18; Harvesting the Field I. The Needed Work II. The Gentle Work III. The Opposed Work

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, what is your calling when it comes to kingdom of God? Do we all have the responsibility to share the good news- or is the work of speaking the truth only for a select few? Well- today we are going to see that Jesus Christ places the work of missions and evangelism upon us all. In other words- we all have a part to play in the ingathering of people. Last week we saw in ch. 9 the call to follow- to be a disciple. This week we see Jesus sending out- to be an apostle. Indeed those who are followers of Christ are also sent out by Christ to reach others. Jesus continues to build on this agricultural theme from the last chapter- not only is the follower of Christ like a plowman putting furrows in the field- these are also like laborers who gather in the harvest. Now back then, the harvest was a joyful but also a labor-filled time! With no combines or mechanical thrashers, a whole army of workers would be sent into a harvest field- the field was white as the ripe wheat has a white or golden color. They would use the sickle- which was a crescent shaped blade on a wooden handle. With a sickle in hand- perhaps you remember this from the Little House on the Prairie- the laborer would cut the stalks of grain and then others would bind them together in sheaves. Jesus compares the world to a giant field- full of wheat- and he sends these 72 to begin the harvest. So today we see that Jesus Christ calls His people to join in the harvest!

### **I. The Needed Work**

We start by seeing the need for this work. Jesus begins in v. 2 by saying- the harvest is plentiful. The ingathering is great- many need to be brought in. Comparing the world to a great or large field- there is much work to be done. This means that there are many who have not heard- many who still need to be reached with the good news. Although Jesus has spent the last 2 years traveling- and the 12 disciples have gone out and returned- there are still many that have not heard! And as Rom. 10 says- how will they hear unless people are sent out to bring that message to them! Indeed- as John 4 says- the field is

white- fully ripe- ready for harvest! The time is now, the number is great- there is much to do in the kingdom of God! The number of elect is large- the unreached future church members is many- so the work needs to be done- so that these too may hear and believe! But compared to this great number of those who need to hear, there is a relatively small number of laborers! I remember walking in vast fields when I was younger- whole sections of land- the size is daunting. What are we compared to the world? What is our church compared to the 9000 residents of Lynwood? What are these 72 compared to the millions in Judea? Well- the number 72 is connected to the number of nations listed back in Gen. 10; it is also the number of elders in Israel found in Numbers 11. So both the nation of Israel- and the number of the nations- is signified in this number 72. How will these many ear- unless ministers are sent out! This message of grace that is brought to the people- this gospel that is carried to them- this is what makes the feet of these men beautiful as Rom. 10 said. Do not delay- go out and reach the missing ones and gather the lost sheep of Israel! This is a spiritual work. The harvest is the Lord's- it is Jesus who gathers and it is Jesus who sends out the workers. Jesus needs to do this work- but He is pleased to use human agents. We are but clay pots that carry the treasure of the gospel as II Cor. 4 says- Christ uses us to spread the fragrance of grace! He appoints these men in v. 1- and He is the one to whom we must pray as v. 2 says. Prayer is such an important part of missions and evangelism. We pray for God to open the hearts of those who hear- we pray for God to send for laborers and raise up men to be missionaries and ministers. We pray for more workers to be sent and we pray for success on our own labor! We see the need for the gospel in this lost world- and we see the need for strength in our work- so we pray! Only by prayer will the harvest be gathered in! Christ need to pen hearts by the Spirit- and by the Spirit equip His workers to labor! Jesus is the Lord of the harvest- the master of the reaping- an on the last day as Rev. 14 says- the harvest of the earth will be fully ripe! It is Jesus who gather His people in- and we participate with Him! Jesus sends His people out- apostelos- the sent ones! He compels His workers- distributing them in this wide world. Workers are used to gather the wheat into God's barn- to

bring the elect into His Kingdom- as the angels will do on that last day! We all participate in this work- by our prayer and our words- the Lord of harvest gathers His grain. And His people say- Here I am Lord- send me!

## **II. The Gentle Work**

But how will they go? Like the sons of thunder in ch. 9? No- like lambs as we read in v. 3. These apostles- and we today- do not make disciples by force but by works and words of humility. We cannot make a person believe- which is both humbling and encouraging! We cannot open people's hearts- the Spirit must do that! We simply tell them the truth- and leave the results to the Lord. The church does not engage in forced or coerced conversion. The reason being- a Christian is one who loves and desires Christ- one who believes and trust in Him. Threats and fear do not bring about real, lasting change. There needs to be a spiritual change- the Holy Spirit giving them a heart of flesh. That is why prayer is so important! So we are told to be as lambs- to be innocent as doves Mt. 10 says. There is a simple, innocence in our lives and words. We speak the truth in love- but our message is not one of high words or lofty argument. We do not trust in human logic or reasoning- as Paul said in I Cor. 2- I did not come with lofty speech or persuasive words but in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power. Or as I Peter 3 says, give a defense for the hope that is in you with gentleness and respect. We are not like Hinduism or Islam that uses fear or manipulation to keep people in. Rather we invite them to come willingly- so that the joyful response to the gospel might be genuine. We don't hit them with a sledge hammer- but rather draw them with the sweet smells of grace! So the laborers go out like lambs.

## **III. The Opposed Work**

But the context is not one of peace. Rather- this work will be opposed. These men go out like lambs among wolves. Sheep among a flock of wild dogs. There is a danger that is ever present in this world- and the lambs are helpless if left on their own. We rely not on human strength- because our foe is a

roaring lion seeking ones to destroy! The picture is given of a little flock surrounded by a pack of growling wolves. The wolves in Judea were like jackals- and are often compared to hostile armies. They were large in size, light in color- and did not always hunt in packs. Throughout scripture- wolves are a picture of violent, greedy and destructive men. Wolves seek to bring fear and destroy. Once again- this brings to mind the hard/ difficult following that Christ calls us to! As Paul said in Acts 20- I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Wolves seek to tear and destroy -to drive away and put the flock into panic. As a fox would destroy a vineyard- a wolf would destroy a flock of sheep. Living in this world means that we battle against our own sin, the Devil and the world. These are our sworn enemies that try to drive us from our Good Shepherd- and try to scatter the flock of Christ! But- we Christ- and He will not allow His harvest to be lost! When the harvest was taking place- the cut grain was an easy target for thieves. That is why in the story of Ruth- Boaz slept by the grain pile at the trashing floor! The Lord of the harvest will not allow thieves to steal His grain- the Good shepherd who laid down his life for His sheep will not allow even one of His little ones to be lost! As John 16:33 says- in this world you will have tribulation- but take heart- I have overcome the world! The mission of Christ to gather His people will be successful! Not one of those given to the Son by the Father will be lost! It is this truth that comforts us- and encourages us to go like laborers into the field! To pray to the Lord for success in the harvest!

To conclude- as we look at the various aspects of the Christians life we can see that they are first of all disciples- they follow Jesus and they learn His words and ways. They also remain in Him- dwelling in the Son and the Father and remaining with His people. But as we saw today- they are also apostles- sent ones that go wherever He sends us! Jesus Christ calls His people to join in the harvest! By our prayers and our words- we are used to gather in! Far and wide the fields are teeming with the waves of ripened grain. Lord of harvest, send forth reapers!