

33. Jesus Sent Out Seventy Disciples

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to follow the example of Jesus. Jesus gave an example of the meaning of true humility. He also gave an example of the concern that we should to save lives and not to destroy them. Then, Jesus gave three examples of what it means to be His disciple. We saw that we want to show our children the importance of keeping their eyes fixed on Jesus. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus again sent out His disciples to the cities where He would be going. This time, Jesus sent out seventy disciples instead of just the Twelve.

As Jesus prepared to send out these seventy disciples, the first thing that He told them was to pray for laborers. Luke 10:1-3 says, “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. 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. Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves.’” We see that Jesus sent out seventy disciples in teams of two so a total of thirty-five different teams were sent out into all of the areas that Jesus would later visit. This would have included the areas of Galilee, Judea, Perea, and possibly even Samaria.

The very first thing He told the seventy was that there was a great harvest. Here, we see that Jesus was talking about a spiritual harvest. The word translated “harvest” means *the act of reaping or the time of reaping*. John 4:35 says, “Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and *then* comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!” Jesus knew that the disciples must first see that the harvest is great before they would ever become laborers in the harvest. Jesus also knew that they must pray for laborers before they would ever become laborers. In the same way, we must see the spiritual needs around us and then begin to pray that the Lord will send laborers into His harvest. As we pray, the Lord will work in our hearts to prepare us to become part of the team of laborers.

Then, Jesus told the seventy that He was sending them forth like lambs among wolves. Jesus described what He meant by wolves when He said in Matthew 7:15, “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.” Wolves are mentioned six times in the New Testament: five times by Jesus and once by Paul. In all six places, it talks about false teachers. Acts 20:29 says, “For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.” The goal of wolves is always to destroy the flock of God. Here, we see an important lesson for our own lives as we serve the Lord. If you have a lamb and a wolf alone, the wolf will eat lunch and the lamb will be the lunch. In contrast, if you have a lamb, a wolf and a shepherd, you will soon have one dead wolf, because the shepherd will destroy the wolf. Only as we are dependent upon Christ and walk with Him are we protected from the false teachers that would try to destroy us.

Jesus also gave the seventy some specific instructions as He sent them out to the places where He would soon go. Luke 10:4-7 says, “Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals; and greet no one along the road. But whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ And if a

son of peace is there, your peace will rest on it; if not, it will return to you. 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.” Here, we see that Jesus had several lessons that Jesus wanted to teach the disciples as they went out to minister. First, Jesus wanted the disciples to learn that He would supply their needs as they went. For that reason, He told them not to take a money bag, a food bag or an extra pair of sandals. This meant that they had to trust God to provide their physical needs.

Second, Jesus told the disciples to greet no one along the road. In the Jewish culture, a greeting was something that took a lot of time and might even include taking the time to eat a meal with the other person. Jesus had just told the disciples that the harvest was great but the laborers were few. It is very easy to spend much time doing things that keep a person busy instead of carrying out the ministry that the Lord has given them to do. That is also true for our own lives. In 1 Kings 20:39-40, we read, “Now as the king passed by, he cried out to the king and said, ‘Your servant went out into the midst of the battle; and there, a man came over and brought a man to me, and said, “Guard this man; if by any means he is missing, your life shall be for his life, or else you shall pay a talent of silver.” While your servant was busy here and there, he was gone.’ Then the king of Israel said to him, ‘So *shall* your judgment *be*; you yourself have decided it.’” Here, a prophet of God was using an illustration to show the king that he would be judged, because he was busy here and there, instead of doing what he had been told to do. It is very easy for Christians to be busy here and there and fail to do what God has called us to do.

Third, Jesus told the disciples to greet the first house that they entered by saying, “peace to this house.” Jesus had said to the Twelve, in Matthew 10:11-13, ““Now whatever city or town you enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and stay there till you go out. And when you go into a household, greet it. If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you.”” The word translated “worthy” means *one who is respected and has influence*. In each town, the disciples were to offer peace to the house of the person that was most respected in that city or town. Jesus knew that a respected person would open the way to make many contacts in that place. The same thing is true today, because a person that is respected influences others.

Jesus told the disciples to stay at that home as long as they were in that town. They were to eat and drink the things that the person provided. Here, we see that the disciples were to be content with whatever that person provided and not go looking for a family that might give better food. 1 Timothy 6:6-8 says, “Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.” Jesus wanted the disciples to realize that their lives would give an example of what it means to be content if they ate what was provided by that family. Jesus said that the laborer is worthy of his wages. As the disciples shared the message of the kingdom of God and served the people of the various cities and towns they visited, Jesus said He would provide their daily needs through the families with whom they stayed.

Jesus told the disciples that some cities would receive them and some would not. Luke 10:8-12

says, “Whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you. And heal the sick there, and say to them, “The kingdom of God has come near to you.” But whatever city you enter, and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, “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.” But I say to you that it will be more tolerable in that Day for Sodom than for that city.” Here, we see that Jesus wanted to prepare His disciples both for acceptance and for rejection.

Some cities would receive the disciples. The word translated “receive” means to accept or to take to one’s self. Such cities would have a welcoming attitude. The disciples were told to do two things in such cities. First, they were to heal the sick in those cities. Jesus often ministered to the physical needs of people as well as the spiritual needs. This statement shows that Jesus wanted to teach the disciples to do the same. However, there is a more important reason why they were to heal the sick. 1 Corinthians 1:22 says, “For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom.” This sign to the Jews was to prepare their hearts for the message of the disciples about Jesus.

Second, we see that the disciples were to tell the people in these cities that the kingdom of God had come near to them. During the time of Jesus, many Jews were looking for the coming of the Messiah. Those Jewish cities that would accept the disciples would also accept the message about the kingdom of God. This was the way that Jesus chose to prepare those cities for His coming and His message.

In contrast, Jesus told the disciples that the people of some cities would not accept them. In that day, many Jews would wipe the dust off their sandals when they returned to Israel from the surrounding countries. This was their way of telling the Gentiles their country was a pagan country because they did not accept and believe in the true God. Jesus said that by wiping the dust off of their sandals, it would be a visible testimony to the Jews of that city that they had rejected the message of the kingdom of God. At the same time, they were to tell the people of that city that the message of the kingdom of God had come close to them but the people of that city had rejected that message. Jesus said that the cities that rejected Him and the message of the kingdom of God would receive a greater judgment than the city of Sodom. The reason for that greater judgment would be due to the fact that they had personally seen and heard the teaching of Jesus and had rejected both Jesus and His teaching.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that they are to show the love of Christ to all people. If they have shown that love to all people and the people reject the message of the death and resurrection of Jesus, they are not rejecting them as a person. Instead, such people are rejecting the message of life that Jesus offers. We are to remind our children that they are to be like lambs among wolves and depend on the Shepherd to defend them, instead of turning against the people who have chosen to reject the message of the death and resurrection of Jesus. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn the same lessons that Jesus taught His disciples.