

Serving Others in Jesus' Name

Luke 10:1-17

3.19.20

I preach tonight in the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Introduction

Tonight our journey leads us to destination #7: Serving others in Jesus' name. What a journey we've been on so far in this season of Lent. And what a journey we've been on this week, as global, national and civil leaders are shutting down businesses, sending children home from school, closing restaurants, and placing temporary suspension on travel, all due to the pandemic of the coronavirus, COVID-19.

The church has seen no greater time to rise up and to be the church than now. The church has seen no greater time to let its light shine amidst the darkness than now. And the church has seen no greater time to embrace the opportunity we've been given to serve others in Jesus' name than now. But in order to embrace the opportunity, in order to maximize the moment, we need to see the obstacle as the new opportunity. We need to see the roadblock as the new doorway. We need to see the problem as the new possibility. And that requires that we have a shift in philosophy - a framework of mindset that we know to be true but are not quite ready to admit.

The church has opened its doors and said to the world: "Our doors are always open and therefore come to us. Come as you are." While that seems nice and welcoming, it is not effective. And more importantly, it is not biblical. Now, more than ever, we know this not to be true. With churches shutting their physical doors to the public, taking precautionary measures to help slow down the spread of COVID-19, the people will not come to us. The people cannot come to us. And if they cannot come to us (which they are not anyway), we must go to them.

That's what our lesson is about tonight. Our lesson is about going to the people. It's about responding to the urgent call of God in Christ to take the Good News of Jesus Christ to the people, so that all people might hear the desperate message of hope that we most desperately need.

So, let's take a look, Luke 10 verse 1: "*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. 2 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" (vs. 1).*

But First

Before Jesus sent the seventy-two out to go to every town and place where he was about to go, Jesus wanted them to know something very important. Jesus wanted them to know that, while they are going out, they will recognize that there is much work to be done but few people willing to do it. Jesus plainly told them, "*The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.*" In other

words, Jesus is telling them that the obstacle is great but the opportunity is greater. He doesn't deny reality; he embraces it as the new opportunity.

As we step out in faith to serve others, there will always be obstacles. There will always be things that stand in our way. Things that discourage us and suggest that we go back from where we came. But don't look at the obstacle. Recognize and name the obstacle for what it is, then move on. Move forward to see the opportunity that God has placed right in front of you, verse 2, *"Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field"* (vs. 2).

Go In Prayer

When you go to serve others in Jesus' name, go in prayer. Because the harvest is plentiful and the people to do the work are few, Jesus invites us to pray, *"Pray to the Lord of the harvest,"* Jesus says. *"Pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into the harvest field,"* Jesus says because *"the workers are few."*

As you serve others in Jesus' name, be prepared to encounter obstacles. But I encourage you to view the obstacle as the new opportunity to witness the power of God displayed in and through you.

When you go to serve others in Jesus' name, go in prayer. And when you go to serve others in Jesus' name, go with no plan, verse 4, *"Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road. 5 "When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' 6 If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you. 7 Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house"* (vss. 4-8).

Go With No Plan

When you go to serve others in Jesus' name, go with no plan. Go with no provision for yourself. And go with no care for your own concerns. Go only with trust in Jesus. Now, this is hard for the western mind to understand. This is extremely difficult for the enlightened thinker to grasp because we are taught how to brainstorm, plan and execute a set of planned criteria, outcomes, agendas, and goals. But when Jesus tells us to go and serve others, he tells us to drop our plans. He tells us not to be concerned for our own cares. He tells us not to be overwhelmed with our own provision. He tells us to trust Him.

Trusting Jesus is trusting that the God who sent you is the God who will provide for you. Trusting Jesus is trusting that the One who called and sent you in the power of His name is the very One who will care for every one of your needs.

So as you go and serve others, go in prayer. Go with no plan, but trust Jesus to provide and meet your needs. And go with a simple message, verse 9, *"Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near'"* (vs. 9).

Go With A Simple Message

When you go to serve others, go with a simple message. The message of Jesus is simple: *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (Jn. 3:16)*. That’s simple, yet profound. Life changing. Simple, yet holds the power to change the world.

Jesus sent out the seventy-two with a simple message, *“Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘the kingdom of God is near’” (vs. 9)*. Jesus’ disciples went to the people, and when they went to the people, they found many who were sick. Who do you know that is sick? Who do you know that has been affected by the coronavirus? Who do you know that is battling illness, cancer, or disease?

The greatest time to speak a message of hope is when all hope seems to be lost. That’s Jesus’ point. That’s what Jesus is saying. As you go in the power of Jesus’ name, go with a simple message: In the name of Jesus you are forgiven of all your sins. In the name of Jesus you are counted among the righteous because of the blood that Jesus shed for you. In the name of Jesus you are set free from the power of sin and death and are granted the gift of eternal life in His name. In the name of Jesus, you are a child of God, for *“you are a new creation in Christ Jesus; the old has gone and the new has come” (c.f. 2 Cor. 5:17)*.

Closing

We are living in unprecedented times. It may seem like the world is coming to an end, but take heart, for Jesus said, *“In this world you will have trouble, but I have overcome the world” (Jn. 16:33, paraphrase mine)*.

Will you go when Jesus calls your name? Will you go when Jesus sends you out? Will you serve others in Jesus’ name with the same love that God has so graciously shown to you? Will you embrace the obstacle as the new opportunity for God to demonstrate His awesome power in and through you? Will you serve others joyously in Jesus’ name, so that others might hear the message of hope in their hopeless situation?

When you go to serve others in Jesus’ name, go in prayer, go with no plan, and go with a simple message.

Amen