**Bring Joy to the Lord’s Heart**

April 12, 2015

Luke 10: 1-24
Key Verse 10:21 “At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, ‘I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.’”

Luke’s Gospel account is the only one that tells of the sending out of the seventy-two. It is also the only version that describes their joyous return and victory over the forces of darkness. These seventy-two men are not called apostles but they are still sent with a commission to represent the Lord. Today’s passage reminds us that with salvation comes the responsibility to join the task of sharing the good news with those who have not yet heard. Some will go great distances, others will share with friends and neighbors, but we are all called to do something. Jesus did not leave the ministry to just the twelve. Neither does he today leave the ministry only to those who are pastors or elders. The amazing thing in this passage is that in verse 21, Luke says Jesus “rejoiced” upon hearing the report of the results of mission of the seventy-two. This is the only place in the Bible where this particular word is used to describe the emotions of Jesus. It is mind-boggling to realize that we have the capacity to make God rejoice by our faithful ministry. Today, let’s consider “How can I bring joy to the Lord’s heart?”

**First**, Jesus sent seventy-two others. Look at 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.” Jesus recruited seventy-two additional soldiers for duty on the frontline. We are not told their names and we do not know how or when Jesus selected them. But we do know that when Jesus called they were ready to go.

Jesus tells the seventy-two that there is much work to do, but not enough people to do the work (2). Jesus instructed these disciples, and in turn all believers, to ask God to send out more workers (2). In the days of Christ’s ministry on the earth the workers were “few” and they still are today. How can we ask God to send forth someone else without first saying, “Lord, send me?” It is impossible to pray regularly for the salvation of a loved one, a neighbor, a friend or a co-worker and not be moved to do something. We cannot help but be moved to be the “someone” that God would use. It is impossible to earnestly pray for the Lord to send workers into the harvest and not make ourselves available to be a part of the answer. When we pray that God would send someone, we place ourselves at His disposal to be one of the workers in reaching the lost. In the passage we see that the ones who he had commanded to pray for workers became workers themselves.

Here we need to overcome a false notion, namely, there is just too much work to do in God’s mission field, and I am only one person. What difference can I make? There is no way that my efforts will make a difference. That notion is false. There is a story of a boy and his grandfather walking along the beach. The beach was covered with starfish that had been washed ashore. Every so often the grandfather would stop, pick up one of the starfish and toss it back into the ocean. After awhile the little boy said to his grandfather, “There are thousands of starfish on the beach. Throwing a few back into the ocean can’t possibly make a difference.” As the grandfather tossed another starfish into the ocean, he said, “It will make a difference to that one.” When we preach the gospel, we make a difference in one person.

In verses 4-12, Jesus gave his disciples several spiritual principles as his field workers. The disciples could have a fruitful harvest when they followed these instructions carefully. Look at verse 4. “Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.” Jesus gives travel instructions. Given the danger and urgency, the disciples are to travel light and press on to their goal. Those who travel heavy worry about their bags all the time and cannot focus on their mission. That’s reason why travel means trouble. Someone may say, “I don’t take a purse or bag but I take credit cards. Is it ok?” Maybe we need that plastic card for our mission trip. If we do so, we depend on money more and depend on God less. Simply speaking, what Jesus means is to depend on God and not to be distracted. But when Jesus sends us, we must just go, depending on God alone. When Jesus said, “Do not greet anyone on the road,” he does not mean that we should be rude, but we should not waste time in needless chats because of urgency.

Look at verse 7. “Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.” Gospel workers must not move around to find better Bible students or a better environment. They must stay in the place where they are accepted and learn to overcome the situation. They must establish one house church in each town. All townspeople know where they have to go for their 1 to 1 Bible study. If they move around, nobody knows where to go.

The message itself was simple. In verse 9 and 11, the disciples are instructed to convey the message that “the kingdom of God is near you.” The message then and now, is of God’s kingdom, that is “His right to rule our lives.” Jesus the King is coming! God’s kingdom is very near. The kingdom of God is to be understood as near as the daybreak is imminent at the close of the night. Those who accept Christ not only become a part of the kingdom of God but the kingdom of God becomes part of them. They not only enter the Kingdom of God but the Kingdom of God enters them.

**Second**, consequence of rejecting the gospel. Look at verses 10-12. “But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, ‘Even the dust of your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God is near.’ I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.” What happens when rejection occurs? In verses 9:51-56, James and John wanted to call fire down from heaven and destroy the Samaritan town. They should not react emotionally. What should they do? They are to denounce rejection by shaking the dust from their feet and declaring their response to people. They are also to declare the kingdom’s nearness. The point is that the people are responsible for their rejection and thus judgment comes against them. What should we do when students reject our invitation on campus? Should we declare God’s judgment on them or call fire upon them? One missionary said, “Do not judge them but be gracious because we have to fish them again. Who knows? Maybe next time they may accept our invitation.” So let’s not take people’s rejection personally because they reject Jesus in the same way. We must simply deliver the message, “The kingdom of God is near.”

Look at verses 13-15. “Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths.” Jesus mentions the name of two cities, Korazin and Bethsaida, which refused to turn to God as examples of the cost of the rejection of God. Capernaum in particular is pointed out for judgment in verse 15. It was here that Jesus performed many of his miracles. It was here that Jesus’ major teachings took place. Capernaum had seen the miracles and heard the teachings but had not responded in faith. This cities demonstrate that there is a cost for rejecting Jesus; that is to be brought down to the depths literally Hades. In other words, the consequence of rejection is eternal. What is at stake is the eternal destiny of every person who hears the gospel.

The central truth here is that the more we know of God’s truth, the more we will be accountable for. Since the people of Korazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum had received such convincing proofs, they are held to greater account for what they had seen. Jesus completes his thoughts in verse 16 by saying, “He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me.” The point for us to remember is this, “Don’t take it personally when people reject God’s message. He is the one they are criticizing and rejecting not you.”

**Third**, rejoice that your names are written in heaven. We don’t know how long the seventy-two were gone, where they went, or how people responded in each place. But we do know that verse 17 reports the high spirits they returned in, “Then the seventy-two returned with joy, saying, ‘Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.” The disciples were overjoyed that they have been used as instruments of God’s power. In verses 18-19, Jesus says to them, “… I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you the authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.” Although I believe that Jesus speaking in retrospect of the fall of Satan from heaven in time past, he is also saying “When I saw the force of darkness defeated through your ministry, I am reminded that Satan is already defeated.” And I believe that Jesus would say to us today, “I see Satan fall like lightning when the church gathers for worship and you invite a friend.” “I see Satan fall like lightning when the one whom you preach the gospel repents and accepts the gospel.” “I see Satan fall like lightning when you forgive the one who has wronged you.”

Verse 20 is a marvelous verse. “However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” The Lord cautions them to not go on rejoicing only over the outwardly spectacular victories but rather to rejoice because their names are written down in heaven. The verb here is perfect tense and means “they have been written and they stand written.” It is a statement of assurance. In doing God’s work there are ups and downs. Sometimes we can see demons flee away and have joyful victory. But sometimes the work of God does not seem to make much progress. We seem to struggle eternally just to raise up one disciple. If our joy depends on our success in doing God’s work, we will go up and down like the weather. This emphasis on power is not the one Jesus wants the disciples to have. What did Jesus teach them about real joy? He wants his disciples to focus on their gracious and secure standing before God. There is a joy greater than their authority over demons. What is it? Their names are written in heaven. Jesus teaches us to find the source of joy in our relationship with him, not in the success of the ministry. Jesus gives us the grace of forgiveness of sins and writes our names in the book of life in heaven.

**Fourth**, the way to bring joy to Jesus. Look at verse 21. “At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, ‘I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.’” It is mind-boggling to me to realize that we have the capacity to make God rejoice by our faithful ministry. Jesus’ joy makes him break into a prayer of thanksgiving. “... I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.” The reasons for his rejoicing are two-fold. Firstly, that the truth did not go only to the “wise and learned” but is something that any humble heart can receive. When Jesus says in verse 21 that he is thankful to the Father that He has “… hidden these things from the wise and learned,” he is not rejoicing because sinners were blind to God’s truth. He rejoiced because the understanding of that truth did not depend on natural abilities or education. One of the gravest forms of spiritual deception is the idea that superior knowledge or intellectual capacity gives one a spiritual advantage. One day all wisdom, all power that has been exercised by man and all human cleverness will pass away, and the remaining truth will be that we are loved by God Himself and His love goes on forever.

Secondly, Jesus rejoiced to be the revealer of the Father. Having praised God for revealing himself to children, Jesus now praises the Father for making him the source of revelation. In verse 22 Jesus says, “All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” John 1:18 says, “No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known.” Hebrews 1:3 says, “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.” What is God like? Exactly as Jesus has revealed him.

Look at verses 23-24. “Then he turned to his disciples and said privately, ‘Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.’” Jesus gave final blessing on the disciples. They were more blessed than many prophets and kings. Jesus wanted them to see themselves in view of God’s history and realize how blessed they were. Jesus wants his disciples to learn how to rejoice in God and be really happy.