

Luke

The Gospel for Everyone

Study 19 | Luke 10:1-24

“New Eyes”

News and Needs

Upcoming Events:

- 1/21- Ministry Leaders Meeting, 7:30 at office. Read *chapter 3 of The Great Giveaway*, on “Leadership”
- 1/30- Intro to PSPC class, 9-12 at the church office. Let your newcomers know, please RSVP.

Opportunities to Serve:

- Hospitality Team Volunteers are still needed for the morning service (coffee & bagels). Contact the church office if someone in your group is willing to help out occasionally.

1. How does understanding the apostles as emissaries of Jesus’ coming kingdom help us to make sense of verses 1-16? What do we learn in these verses about the nature of his kingdom? About the authority and duties of his ambassadors? About what responses can be expected from people?

It’s important to remember something we heard in the sermon last week: that Jesus is very much under suspicion here of stirring up an armed revolt and preparing to take over Jerusalem as the long-awaited Messiah, the greater son of King David whose throne would never end. This is what people expected; it’s why Herod is so threatened by Jesus’ actions and words even from afar. And in chapter 9 there was an episode not that different from the one in our passage this week. In chapter 9:1-6 Jesus sends out the 12 disciples. Here are the marching orders Jesus gave them:

And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. And he said to them, “Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not have two tunics. And whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. And wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them.” And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.

Note a couple things from comparing this with our account in chapter 10. First, both of these actions are all about “the kingdom”. They are going out and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God in Jesus. They are telling people and towns that when they come near--and God’s power through them--the long-awaited kingdom itself has come near. Second, the first time Jesus sends out the 12 together as one small unit. In chapter 10 Jesus sends out 72 (6X the first number) disciples. And this time they split into pairs and cover as many towns as possible. And in doing so they are praying that God will raise up other ‘laborers’ to join them, even as they recruit. Now you might begin to understand how Herod feared that Jesus was raising an army to confront him.

Understanding the (sometimes misguided) expectations for Jesus’ kingdom, as well as some of its actual and intended political overtones, helps us to see just how Jesus fulfilled, transformed and even contradicted some of the normal expectations. We learn that his kingdom is indeed militant (‘lambs in the midst of wolves’), but not in the ways we might imagine; the violence and opposition the disciples will bring is chiefly a spiritual one (though later they will be beat and murdered). The kingdom is one that will grow (‘the harvest is plentiful’). It comes from the weak and those on the move (no money, knapsacks). It is a kingdom that ‘sues’ for peace with each household and town. It is a healing kingdom. It is a kingdom that warns of impending judgment and destruction if towns will not agree to the terms for peace.

Ambassadors are persons who carry the full authority of the one who sent them. So these 72 disciples are as the king himself. If towns reject them, they have rejected the king. These emissaries have full power and authority. And Jesus prepares them to both be blessed and received well and fed, just as they will be rejected and cast out by some.

2. How do the apostles react in verses 17-24 to their experience in mission? What is significant about Jesus' response to them? What seems to motivate Jesus in this episode, and make him happy?

Luke says the 72 returned with "joy". They seemed surprised, excited, and even happy that Jesus' own power and miracles had been present in their own ministry. Not only did human beings submit to their news and work of the kingdom, but "even the demons are subject to us in your name!" God's kingdom was one that would even work through them to conquer evil spiritual forces. Jesus confirms that their experience was not an anomaly: it was exactly as he had intended. He tells them he was there when Satan fell! He says he has given them authority *over* every evil and every power of Satan. He promises that no evil shall hurt them. He wants them to know this. He is the Great King and as emissaries of his kingdom they are supported by his almighty cosmic force--and will share in it. But then Jesus goes on to say, "Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." What a strange thing to say! Why do you think Jesus changes the focus of the conversation in this manner? Whatever options you consider, it does at least seem clear that Jesus was motivated and made happy in this passage not primarily in the pyrotechnics and power-encounters of spiritual warfare, but instead in the redemption of individuals and the securing of their enrollment in God's eternal kingdom. And it is this certain promise that Jesus wants them to rejoice in.

3. What aspects of this mission apply to us today? And how? In what ways should we expect the nature, authority, duties, and responses of God's kingdom to operate similarly for us? In the midst of mission, what motives and desires does Jesus most seem to want from us? How does this knowledge help you in the challenges of representing God's kingdom?

There are perhaps no clean or final answers to these questions, so hopefully they will produce good and robust discussion. When Jesus is about to ascend into heaven after his resurrection, he tells these same disciples that "*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*" And we read throughout the New Testament of these apostles spreading throughout the known world proclaiming the good news of Jesus' kingdom. And so it stands to reason that many of the aspects of the particular mission in Luke 10 still have some application today. The harvest is still plentiful, we are told by the New Testament. We are still sheep amongst wolves. We still proclaim the message of peace and reconciliation. We are still ambassadors. We still heal and cast out evil by Jesus' name. We still 'travel lightly' and partake in hospitality. We still warn of impending judgment for those who don't submit to the peace of King Jesus. Much is the same.

Knowing how much we have in common with the 72 in this passage, we might occasionally find ourselves surprised when God really does use us to 'channel' his power in the world. Do you ever find yourself surprised and happy when someone comes to faith in Jesus, or you conquer a long-fought sin, or you see growth and spiritual beauty in someone, or you see some evil in the world finally cease to be? In the midst of all this, Jesus seems to be saying, "Yes, yes, didn't I tell you it would be this way? I have power over everything and will always be with you. But you should really, really be happy--and focus on the fact--that your name is written permanently in Heaven. How would having such an attitude help you when you're 'in battle'?"