

Leaders Notes

Over the next 5 weeks we will be exploring the story of the sending of the 72¹ as it is recorded in Luke chapter 10. We hope it will be a fruitful time for you and your church as we seek to tease out what it says to us about Jesus, his mission and ultimately our mission as local churches that are seeking to make an impact both across the street and across the globe.

As we contemplate the sending of the 72 it's helpful to remember the context in which it occurs. As with any individual passage we need to keep in mind the context of the wide sweep of the Bible's grand narrative. So we note that Luke 10 is a significant narrative about the mission of Jesus and his disciples but it is not the only one of its kind, there are many other missionary narratives in the New Testament (NT).

To understand what this passage is saying to us about mission, it also helps to be mindful of its place in the wider narrative flow of Luke-Acts. For instance by reading Luke 10 in light of the whole of Luke's Gospel we come across Luke 22:22-38, which suggests that the very specific instructions in Luke 10 are not universally binding on all future Christian mission. Nevertheless as we eaves drop in on the mission of the 72, and through the lens the rest of scripture, we find important things for us to grasp about Jesus' identity, His mission and subsequently our mission.

So by way of quick summary of the context; Luke 1:1-9:50 begins with his prologue expressing his desire to set down an orderly account *'of the things that have been fulfilled among us'* for Theophilus. Chapters 1:5-2:5 focus on the birth and childhood of Jesus and create growing expectations about the coming of Israel's Messiah and the salvation that He will bring. Then, from chapters 3:1-4:13, we have the preparation of the ministry of Jesus. The next section of the Gospel from chapters 4:14-9:50 focus on Jesus' ministry in Galilee. He announces His ministry program in Luke 4:14-30 and then outworks that through His teaching and miracles. The next section is where our story is placed. From chapters 9:51-19:48 Jesus is on the way to Jerusalem. The cue to the narrative occurs in Luke 9:51 where *'Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.'*

The earlier part of the Gospel has been oriented around establishing the identity of Jesus and the nature of the messianic mission, but now the narrative becomes about how Jesus will fulfil God's purpose by being rejected, suffering, crucified and ultimately resurrected. It seems the story takes on a fresh sense of urgency as Jesus' mission moves toward the climax of the cross and resurrection.

Along with this shift in the narrative it's worth noting another new development in the progression of the story. **Up until the end of Luke 8, the disciples have been *following* Jesus; they have been *with* Jesus, *watching* Jesus almost like passive spectators of Jesus' mission. But now they are invited to step out of the grandstand and onto the playing field. They are called to be participators in Jesus' mission. A process that began in chapter 9:1-17 with the sending of the 12 disciples is now continued with the sending of the 72 in chapter 10. The theme of sending will become a great theme of Luke's work. In chapter 24:45-49 we find Luke's version of the great commission. The mission that began focusing on the lost sheep of Israel will be to all nations.**

The sending motif continues in Acts 1:8, a verse that in fact becomes programmatic for the rest of the book structure of Acts. It will unfold its story by telling us how the Good News of Jesus spread in Jerusalem, Judea and, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Like stumbling on a seam of gold that leads us to a major nugget, in Luke 10 we are stumbling upon a thematic seam that leads to one of the great nuggets or motifs in the epic work which is in Luke and through Acts. That of course is Jesus Christ and his mission; mission to the ends of the earth!

¹ 72 or 70

Week 1: The Harvest Is Plentiful

Passage: Luke 10:1-3

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go. **And he said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest. Go your way; behold I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.”**

Introduction:

As Jesus commissions His followers to take the Kingdom of God to the towns and villages in the region He begins by explaining what is before them. They are few, but those who need to hear this message are many. Jesus himself will follow the labourers but these labourers are an important part of the Kingdom of God. They are people sent by Jesus himself.

Sermon notes:

Mission is about Jesus

So Jesus sends the 72. Many scholars believe the number 72 (or 70) is symbolically significant just as the number 12 is significant in choosing the disciples. Some associate the number with events recounted in Numbers 11:16, 24 where Moses appoints 70 elders whom he gives a share of the Spirit so that they may share the burden of leading the people of God through the exodus experience. The likes of Tom Wright and Leon Morris suggest this says something profound about the identity of Jesus himself. Jesus in His life, ministry, suffering, rejection, crucifixion and resurrection is leading the new exodus, rescuing people to which the ministry of the disciples point to. (See Luke 9:31 for the interesting use of exodus language in Jesus' understanding of His vocation). Jesus Christ, his uniqueness, His identity as Messiah, Lord and Saviour needs to be lifted high as we champion and take part in mission. Jesus is sending assistants to help in leading the new exodus. **The implication being that our mission will be inviting people to join the new exodus found in the Kingdom of God.**

Mission is to all the world

Some, like Leon Morris and Joel Green, suggest the 70/72 reference maybe an echo of the table of the nations in Genesis. The point being that the choosing of the 72 anticipates the mission to the nations of the world and highlights the Gospel is for the whole world.

Mission is for all believers

Others, it must be said, see no symbolism at all. Darrell Bock believes that the significance of the choosing of the 72 lies simply in the fact that Jesus expands his ministry beyond the 12. The point being that mission is not confined to a select few. **There is always a need for more people to take up their cross (Luke 9:21-27, 9:57-62) and become harvesters for the Lord.**

Mission is best done in community

Another thing worth noting is that the workers were sent out two by two. This was no doubt for support, fellowship and mutual encouragement. It's reported here but also seems to be part of the practice of mission of the apostles moving forward through Acts. Wherever we hear of mission ventures we hear of small Gospel teams; Paul and Barnabas, Paul and Timothy, Barnabas and John Mark and on it goes. **The point is, mission is one of the richest expressions of Christian community. It seems that God uses community not only to send out workers (Acts 13) but mini Gospel communities help sustain us in mission.**

Mission proclaims God's salvation

Next we note that Jesus uses the farming imagery of a harvest. Often in the Old Testament (OT) harvesting is a metaphor for judgement (Isaiah 17:4-6; 24:12-13; Jeremiah 51:33; Hosea 6:11; Joel 3:13) but here it seems people are to be harvested for their own good, for the purposes of salvation. Like the fishing imagery of Luke 5:10, more and more people are to be brought into the Kingdom of God. As a further note Matthew records this same saying emerging from Jesus' compassion as he looks at a large, helpless crowd.

The need for more workers

Whilst the harvest is large the workers are few. Being a harvester is difficult. In several places in Luke chapter 9, Jesus often talks about the difficulty of following Him, it involves a cross (9:21-27) and putting Him above all other loyalties (9:57-62). There are great joys in living for Jesus and His Kingdom but also great costs and responsibilities. So much so, we are left wondering at the end of chapter 9 whether there will in fact be anybody left following Jesus. Happily in 10:1 we find out that there is not just 12, but in fact 72. **The reality of a huge harvest and so few workers remains a sad and challenging reality for the church's mission today.**

Pray for more workers

The reality of such a large harvest and such few workers could lead to the manic activity of the few trying desperately to overcome their limited resources by sheer effort of will. But manic activity is not the call for response. Prayer is. Look for God's sovereignty here. God is the 'Lord of the Harvest.' It is He who 'sends'. It is His 'harvest field.' The Gospel message expansion is in God's control. He is the one who 'thrusts out' labourers. **So in humble dependence on God's provision we are to pray. As we pray however we must be aware that we might just be the answer to our own prayers as the 12 and 72 were.**

Mission is costly

Linked to this cost of following Jesus is the reality in which the workers find themselves. Those who come to work for the Lord and seek to be harvesters will be walking into difficulty. This time Jesus uses the imagery of lambs being among wolves. Lambs are creatures without much protection; they can't protect themselves but need a shepherd to take care of them. They are followers yet can't look after themselves when danger is around. Wolves on the other hand search and are on the look out to catch a lamb and devour it. **A follower of Jesus sent into the harvest is like a lamb, protected by Jesus the True Shepherd, being chased and harassed by those who seek to have them devoured. They are in a vulnerable position and will be relying on the protection of the Lord as they seek to share the message of the Kingdom.**

Insider Story:

Ask someone in your congregation that has experience in being a worker for the Lord to share their story. What was their experience in being sent out into the harvest? What were the challenges for them as they served God in this way?

Watch DVD clip - Global Interaction cross-cultural worker Dave provides insight from his setting.

Conclusion:

- Jesus sends believers into their wider community to witness to the Kingdom of God.

In what areas of your community are you being a witness?

- There is a desperate need for people to commit to being a worker in the harvest.

Take time to discern whether the Lord is calling you to be a full-time worker?

- God wants us to pray for people to take up the task of working for the Kingdom.
Can you pray for more workers?

[Join the prayer campaign]

- Those already in the harvest working are in a vulnerable position.
Pray for those you know who are currently working at sharing the Gospel. They are in need of our prayers.

Take Home:

1. Spend some time in prayer; ask God what part of the harvest you are called to be part of?
2. Find out what cross-cultural workers your church supports; spend 10 minutes this coming week praying for them as they work in the harvest.

Week 2: Travel Lightly

Passage: Luke 10:4

“Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road.”

Introduction:

Jesus continues talking to those He is sending out. It's good to remember that He is talking about a particular short-term mission trip to the lost sheep of Israel just after 'Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem' (9:51). Jesus' time was limited and the purposes of God were culminating in His suffering, crucifixion and resurrection. **They needed to hear Jesus' message of peace (v5) and turn from their sins and trying to build God's kingdom in their own way through violence and revolution.** Something they largely ignored and rebelled in AD70 and were brutally crushed by the Roman Empire. Israel needed to hear and heed the message of the Good News urgently. **Though there are elements of this passage with particular application to the 72 in the text, we learn valuable insight for the way we can do mission.**

Sermon Notes:

Carry nothing

The first thing the 72 are told is to travel lightly. In fact, it almost sounds like they aren't to take anything at all. They are to take no money bag, which is a purse or similar to our wallet. A knapsack according to Darrel Bock is a traveller's bag and was a normal part of the ancient itinerant preacher's equipment; it held supplies and indicated independence. The instruction not to carry such bag highlights the need to trust in God's provision. No sandals probably did not mean without shoes but they were not to take a spare pair. **They needed to go as they were. Those being sent out into the harvest have what they need. They have the Lord Jesus for protection and will be supplied with all they need while out in the harvest so nothing more is needed.**

Partnership

As we reflect on what this passage has to say more widely about mission we notice that God does not call every missionary to travel with such meagre supplies. We see a variety of models in the rest of the NT. We see the generosity of local church communities partnering with Paul in resourcing him for mission in Romans 15:23-33, Philippians 1:3-6; 3:10-20, 1 Timothy 4:9-15. We also encounter flexibility to the degree in which missionaries relied on funding from partners outside or the communities themselves depending on the local ministry context and the ability to help support workers. (See 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12, Romans 15:23-33; 1 Corinthians 16:1-5; 2 Corinthians 8-9)

However, as we look at this passage through the lens of the NT we see clearly **that joining God in His mission required travelling lightly and not letting financial security become a priority over Christian ministry and mission. Generally speaking there seemed to be a beautiful inter-dependant, sacrificially generous, partnership in the Gospel between missionaries and churches to further the cause of Jesus Christ.**

Freedom

There is also a need to let go of comfort and not to be weighed down about the materialism, consumerism and security that surrounds us today. Just as it is easier to get through an airport terminal when only having carry-on luggage, so too it is easier for the workers of the harvest to keep things simple and take very little on their journey. **They are to leave behind that which binds them, which holds them up, which stops them from moving forward. This includes leaving behind cultural baggage and qualms that held them back from going to people, which we will see later on.**

Authentic relationships

Travelling lightly in mission also requires us to live in inter-dependant community and reliance on the welcome and hospitality of those that we go to. At first this may be counter intuitive. As people in mission we often feel compelled to be the ones with all the resources. This has both served to disempower local communities from real ownership of ministries and at times seen relationships with missionaries to be viewed through the lens of potential financial gain. Relationships of inter-dependence can increase the opportunity for authentic relationships.

Making space

'Travelling lightly' not only speaks of the physical and material lightness required in mission but also the openness we have in our time and relationships. There is much that holds us up from sharing the message of the Kingdom, nothing more so than having our weeks filled with activities and appointments. There is something to be said about giving space in our schedules so we can be open to how God is leading and moving in our lives.

More directly, the more intentional we are about leaving behind physical and emotional bindings the more open we are to see God move and have the space to respond to that. This might mean that we have the freedom to find new ways of building relationships. It may mean we have more energy to both give and receive hospitality. It may mean we find ourselves drawn closer to Jesus and His mission because we are open to seeing how He will use us to build the Kingdom.

The mission is urgent

Furthermore, Jesus highlights the urgency of the mission when he says 'to greet no one along the road'. At first glance it seems Jesus advocates being rude to people by simply continuing on to their destination, ignoring social mores of greeting. This isn't quite the case. Jesus is using hyperbole to highlight the urgency of this mission and the dedication and focus on the task that will be needed.

Middle Eastern culture was generally hospitality focussed. It included many traditions and customs of welcome that took time. They could be a welcome source of rest and refreshment for the traveller, but also a distraction for those on an urgent errand. These customs could hold the workers up. Instead, Jesus encourages them to be so intentionally focussed on the harvest that they don't spend too much time worrying about the superfluous customary greetings. They are to move from traditional greetings and get on with building meaningful relationships. Jesus directs His workers to get on with the task of sharing the Gospel of the Kingdom and make that a priority.

Again this passages instruction, 'to greet no one along the road', needs to be first heard in the context of this particular mission of the 70/72 to local villages in the area of the Jordan – as Jesus' ministry heads toward it's culminating events. To not greet someone on the road was a subversion of cultural norms for the sake of the mission. In contrast in our local settings the opposite might be true. In cities, towns and regions people are ever less present with the ones they are with through the fragmentation of communities and attentiveness to social media - so to actually greet someone on the street might be a missional subversion of cultural norms!

That being said, to look at this passage through the lens of the rest of the NT is to see a similar burden for the urgency of followers of Jesus to prioritise the mission of God. **Though every narrative of Acts, through every epistle, through Revelation we see urgent affirmations that we are the people of God, and we are encouraged, challenged, exhorted and at times even warned to make His mission the priority of our lives: whether it is our going, our praying, our giving, our partnering, our sending or our working to prioritise mission.**

Insider Story:

Ask someone in your congregation to share about how they stay focussed on Jesus and the tasks He asks of them. What kind of things have they had to put aside in order to be a worker in the harvest?

Ask the question of a ministry you're involved in at church too. Is there anything that is distracting you or the ministry at the moment?

Watch DVD clip - Global Interaction cross-cultural worker Muana provides insight from his setting.

Conclusion:

- When Jesus sends workers out into the harvest field He gives them all that they require. Are you trusting that Jesus has equipped you in your ministry right now?
- Being a harvester requires us to carry little. What do you need to lay aside in order to walk more lightly as a pilgrim of Jesus?
- There is much to distract us from the mission God has given us. Is there anything distracting you from being in the harvest field right now? What can you do to change that?

Take Home:

1. Spend some time in prayer thanking God for the gifts He has given you and the way He continues to equip you.
2. Write down three things in your life that is holding you up in your relationship with Jesus. Lift them up in prayer and give them over to God.
3. What is distracting you from being involved in God's harvest?
Talk to someone who can help you be involved in ministry in your neighbourhood more easily.
4. God will provide the needs of those who work in his harvest field.
Are you taking on too much yourself, do you need to handover your needs and wants to God and trust him for them?

Week 3: Person of Peace

Passage: Luke 10:5-8

Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house!' And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the labourer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house. Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you.

Introduction:

Here Jesus gives the 70/72 advice on how to greet people they meet in the context of their mission. As the 70/72 encounter people in the towns and villages they are to enter people's houses as they are welcomed and are to begin building relationships. Jesus encourages those He sends to approach each household with an intention of bringing peace. If a 'person of peace' is found at this place then the peace will rest upon them. If this isn't the case they will move on to the next place.

Sermon Notes:

Announcing the shalom of God - peace

The messengers go with the message '*Peace to this house!*' Peace is a rich word in the Gospel of Luke. Some say the announcement of peace, seems to be a piece with the announcement of the Good News of the Gospel. You see this in the early part of Luke's Gospel when the announcement of the coming Messiah is associated with the coming of peace. You see this later in the Gospels as the '*shalom*' of God follows someone who has encountered the ministry of Jesus. (See Luke 1:79, 2:14 & 29; 7:50; 8:48; 19:38, 42; 24:36) To say, 'Peace to this house!' was much more than a simple greeting. In the Greco-Roman world peace was the absence of war, social discord and sedition but the Hebrew concept of shalom meant much more. Joel Green suggests that shalom pointed to a communal well-being, euphoria, security, plenty and the like. Bock goes on to say that the presence of the disciple announcing "Peace be with you!" represents the presence of God's gracious offer.

Central to any mission venture is the announcement of God's shalom available in the Lord Jesus Christ. The 'shalom' of God calls us to care about people holistically. Peace again and again in the NT is presented as one of the great gifts of being in relationship with God through Jesus, applied to our lives by the Holy Spirit. (See Rom 1:7, 5:18:6, 14:7, 15:13; 1 Corinthians 1:3, 7:15; 2 Corinthians 1:2, 13:11; Galatians 1:3, 5:22; Ephesians 1:2, 2:14-17; Philippians 1:2, 4:7; Colossians 1:20; 1 Thessalonians 1:1) One of Global Interaction's core beliefs is that **God's greatest gift is a life changing relationship experience of Jesus. The peace, the Shalom of God that Jesus Christ brings to both communities and individuals is one of the foundations of this belief.**

People of peace

Highlighted in this passage is the potential that a person of peace has in the message of the gospel being welcomed into a community. You see, the hoped for response to the message of peace as talked about above, is that the message would be welcomed by what Luke describes as a '*son of peace*', or '*child of peace*'.

A person of peace is someone who welcomes the worker and their message into their lives and home. Their welcoming of both the message and the messenger actually helps the message to find a home among a people. Jesus suggests that when the 72 find such a welcome **that they are to '*remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide*, for the labourer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house. Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you.'** The welcome and hospitality of the person of peace becomes a base through which whole communities potentially are reached and the Good News is shared.

It is important to note that we are not using this person to get to other people. It is rather recognition that God does not just have a plan for individuals but his passion is for whole households and communities. He has a plan for communities' movements toward Jesus. A person of peace can be the start of a movement such as this.

For those who welcome both the message and the messenger, it seems a beautiful transaction takes place. Mission is not about a giver and receiver, a one-way relationship. It becomes a two-way reciprocation of giving and receiving. The messenger brings the beautiful greeting of the gift of the presence of God in Jesus, and the person of peace empowers mission by providing hospitality, food, drink and a place to stay. But they are not just welcoming the message themselves; through their partnership with the messengers they become a potential doorway for the good news to impact whole communities.

During the progression of Luke-Acts this concept of the messenger of peace, being welcomed by a person of peace, who in turn empowers more ministries, is a surprisingly common phenomenon. There are many examples; Simon's mother-in-law's house becomes a base for Jesus' healing and preaching ministry (4:38). As Matthew welcomes Jesus into his house, his home becomes a place of ministry to disreputable people (5:27-31). Others examples include the home of Martha and Mary (10:38-42) the home of Zacchaeus (19:1-9) the home of Cornelius (Acts 10-11) Lydia's house (16:11-15) the household of the Philippian Jailer (Acts 16:33) the home of Aquila and Priscilla (18:1-5). **It seems God's plan is rarely to save just an individual from a household and extract them away from kith and kin, it seems that each new person of peace becomes an opening to reach a new household, a new community – to see people movements toward Jesus.**

Cultural flexibility

Finally it's worth noting one more thing from these verses. The phrase *'eating and drinking whatever is put before you'* is important. Leon Morris suggests that in the area of the Jordan to which the 72 were being sent, were many Gentiles. This meant that the food they might be offered might not always satisfy the rigorist for ceremonial purity. Jesus was advocating they were not to be side tracked into fussiness about food and food laws. The Good News of Jesus must go out even if it meant eating risky food. Risky and unorthodox table fellowship has been a theme of the Gospel and here in the ministry of the 72 that motif will continue (See Luke 5:27-32, 33-39; 7:36-50). Furthermore, it is again a beautiful anticipation of the wider Gentile mission that will be launched after Peter's vision (Acts 10 & 11) that helped him to realise *'how true it is that God does not show favouritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right.'*

Here the writer touches on the wonder that the Gospel will eventually include people of every culture, tribe, nation and tongue. As Luke anticipates, and Acts draws out explicitly; Gentiles would not have to become Jewish in cultural markers, or customs, or language or culture to become part of the people of God. Accepted through the Gospel, they could worship God in their own heart language and their own cultural forms. **This means at times that the onus was on those in mission was to adapt culturally to enter the lounge rooms, share at the tables and worldviews of those they were ministering to.** We see here a forerunner to Paul's flexible missionary mindset found in 1 Corinthians 9 where Paul says in summary, *'I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the Gospel that I may share in its blessings.'*

This is where things get really exciting. **This is not about culturally adapting for a time so that we can get people in that we become a homogenous Christian culture as kind of bait and switch. Cultural flexibility in our sharing of the Gospel flows from the belief that there will one day be people from 'every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne of God and the Lamb.'** (Revelation 7) The new creation will be a culturally diverse place where in fact the kings of the nations will bring the treasures from their cultures. As Revelation describes of the new creation; *"I did not see a temple in the city, because The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light and the Kings of the earth will bring their splendour into it. On no day will gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honour of the nations will be brought into it."*

At this point missiologist Chris Wright says, “Think of the prospect! All of human culture and language, literature, art, music, science, business, sport, technological achievement – actual and potential – all available to us. All of it with the poison of evil and sin sucked out of it forever. All of it, glorifying God. All under his loving and approving smile. All of it for us to enjoy with God and indeed, being enjoyed by God.”

Global Interaction’s tag line, *‘empowering communities to develop their own distinctive ways of following Jesus’*, is not just a fancy marketing line or a new fangle trendy way of talking about mission; what they are doing is getting people from every culture ready for life in the New Creation! And as we all know the only way to new creation is Jesus.

Insider Story:

When was the last time you were blown away by the hospitality shown toward you? Take some time to reflect why this hospitality resonated so strongly and what you could do to provide hospitality toward others.

Watch DVD clip - Global Interaction cross-cultural worker Mark provides insight from his setting.

Conclusion:

- It is important for labourers of the harvest to approach their mission with grace and peace. When you are involved in ministry to your neighbours or through your church do you have this attitude? How can you develop it?
- Relationships with certain people take time and require discernment. Are you building deep relationships with people in your community? Are there some relationships that you need to ‘move on’ from?
- As God’s workers we are to contribute to the community, both church and wider community. How are you serving the communities you are part of? In what ways can you build relationships through serving and helping others?

Take Home:

1. In the next three weeks resolve to invite someone to your home for a meal. Could you consider someone you don’t know well?
2. As you think about the different communities you are involved in, pray for discernment as to what relationships should be a priority for you.
3. As you meet someone new in the next little while make an effort to be a person of peace.
4. Look for a person of peace and prayerfully take opportunities to share the Good News.

Week 4: The Kingdom Of God Is Near

Passage: Luke 10:9-11

Heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near.' I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.

Introduction:

The clear focus in this verse is that Jesus is the presence of God's saving activity among people. Jesus is the Good News of salvation and restoration to the world. The 70/72 were to journey with a passion to see the gift of Jesus, His peace, His kingdom be embraced by all the people. They were to believe that God's greatest gift is a life transforming relationship with Jesus and they were to take that message to people that were unaware of this. It is a holistic mission – sharing the Good News in what they say and how they act.

Sermon Notes:

Proclaiming the Kingdom of God is near

One way to see God working in our lives or in a particular place is to see it as our mission to share this message that in Jesus the Kingdom of God is near. There is in fact another King and his name is Jesus Christ. For those in the first century it meant Jesus was Lord and Saviour and that Caesar in all his power and might was not. For us in our time we need the reminder that Jesus is King and we belong to His Kingdom. We are to walk to the beat of another drum and not to that of the prevailing culture. We are to proclaim his Kingship, and his Kingship is good for humanity as Luke 4 has already hinted.

Practicing the Kingdom of God

So here in Luke's gospel the disciples were told to demonstrate the Kingdom of God by healing the sick and proclaiming the Kingdom of God. The gospel writer Luke is holding up a snapshot of the new creation Jesus brought, as human beings were being made new. People were being healed, restored, both physically and socially. People were experiencing wholeness and reconciliation where there had been devastation, sickness, oppression and enmity. The 72 were mediators of this new Kingdom as they bore witness to Jesus, and by what they said and did.

Communities of practice

We too are called to live for the Kingdom of God. Opportunities for this are all around us if we have eyes to see and a heart that wants to share. To really believe that God's greatest gift is a life transforming relationship with Jesus is to be committed to sharing that message in both word and deed. It does mean going out and moving in circles where Jesus is not yet known rather than waiting for people to come to us or our church or join our programs. As important as these programs can be there are simply now so many beyond the programmatic reach of our churches. So to go, becomes key.

A good place to start is to look with intentionality at the various 'communities of practice' that operate in your life or the life of others. These communities of practice are activities that naturally occur and you may already be involved in but become places where God can use you to share the message of the Kingdom. Whether it's our work place, sporting clubs, book clubs, movie groups, community playgroups, mothers groups, professional groups or whatever networks we are currently part of, we need to see them as places where we can genuinely serve God – not just as distractions from the real business of what happens at church on a Sunday. The missionary task is one we are to share and an intentional missionary mindset is necessary.

To take it a step further you can be intentional about how you approach this activity. Rather than simply being there for the sport and fun, it becomes a harvest field, where you are now one of the workers who are building authentic relationships with your teammates.

Just like the 70/72 we can prayerfully be on the lookout for the person of peace who may welcome you into the club or team and then seek to live lives reflecting the subversive kingdom values of God's peace in Jesus and His salvation. This type of intentionality is an important key in seeing the activities you do during the week as being part of being a witness as a follower of Jesus, drawing people closer to the Kingdom of God.

Mixed response

Although the message is one of salvation and restoration, Jesus acknowledges that not everyone will welcome the Good News. Some will not receive the Gospel or its messengers. The 70/72 are only responsible to share the message, the response to the message is out of their control but in choosing to reject Jesus it is clear that they are rejecting all Jesus has to offer in salvation and restoration. It will be hard for them, 'more bearable for Sodom on that day than for that town.' These are sobering thoughts. It is God's judgement not ours.

Keeping going

By telling us that some will welcome the message and some will reject it, Jesus creates realistic expectations. Message bearing will carry both with it deeps joys and profound sadness but the mission is worth persevering in. With these words Jesus gives encouragement to keep going— not to be discouraged by people who don't accept the message. We must expect moments that feel like failure. Though heavy and distressing there is a call to persevere in the mission that we are called to. We brush off the things that weigh us down, we continue to travel lightly, and we rely on God.

Insider Story:

Talk with someone who has a mission connection at your church. Ask them to share how they went about telling others about Jesus. How did they know whether to continue in certain relationships, but more importantly, when they were to walk away?

Pray for guidance in who to share your story with in the next week or two. Be alert to those who may want to hear from you.

Watch DVD clip - Global Interaction cross-cultural worker Morris provides insight from his setting.

Conclusion:

- There are times when moving on from relationships seems to be required if the mission of God is to be fulfilled.
How do you think we can discern this in the relationships we have with others?
- God will judge those who hear the revelation of His Kingdom.
Whether they respond positively or negatively is not ours to judge, it is for God.
- God's judgement will be full and forceful for those who reject him. Jesus has already said the harvest is plentiful, how can we be part of the solution? What can we be part of in order to help people from this judgement?
- People will accept and reject the Good News, this message of the Kingdom.
What stops us from sharing the message of the Kingdom to others?

Take Home:

1. How can we show the Kingdom of God is near in our everyday experiences?
2. Write down on a piece of paper who and how you will share an aspect of your relationship with Jesus to someone in the next fortnight.
3. Pray and seek God's guidance on which relationships in your life need to be held loosely. Seek out a mature believer for their guidance in this matter.
4. What part of your week is most like a 'community of practice'? How could you be more intentional about your relationships and weekly activities for the work of the Kingdom?

Week 5: Being Part of the Solution, Not the Problem (Overview/one week option)

Passage: Luke 10

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go. And He said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest. Go your way; behold I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house!' And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the labourer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house. Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The Kingdom of God has come near to you.' But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the Kingdom of God has come near.' I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town... Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me; but whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me."

Introduction:

One of the problems we can see from the passage, and the last four weeks, is that there aren't enough followers being harvesters in the field.

Rather than being part of the problem, we are to be part of the answer. We are the ones who have been sent by Jesus to share his Good News to the people of the world. In connection with the previous weeks we are involved in the wider story of God. Today, we continue to be God's messengers. We are His workers in His harvest field, seeking to share the Good News with the people who need to hear it. And while there will be judgement on those who reject God that is not ours to take part in. We are here to be part of what God is doing in the world. Whether we will be accepted or rejected it is the message of the Gospel that provides hope for the world and true salvation for those who accept it. This salvation is wide and deep. Gospel transformation is inclusive and changes everything. It makes a difference to the social and financial setting. Including and contributing to the society.

Sermon Notes:

Part of the solution

If we aren't being followers of Jesus who are taking part in the harvest then we are being part of this problem, are we not? How do we become part of the solution? It is by intentionally living lives that are witnessing to our faith and to Jesus' impact in our lives. It is by not merely walking through life believing that we know the Good News and leaving it to rot. It is through becoming one of the workers.

Costly

As we've seen there is a cost to this. It may mean giving up or leaving behind things that we consider precious to us. We need to let go of that which binds us down or stops us moving forward, and is a hindrance to us being at work in the harvest field. This may mean leaving behind our ways of doing things and old priorities that don't reflect the values of the Kingdom of God. This may mean changing our priorities from making life about the accumulation of things, and freeing up time and space to form authentic relationships so that the good news of Jesus may be shared.

Look out for people of peace

As we intentionally go about focussing on being a solution in the Kingdom of God we are to seek out those who just may be a person of peace in our world. We are to go to those who welcome us and our message, who show an openness to God and his message of peace that is in Jesus. What we need to do here is to open our eyes to the people God has placed in our lives and see where God is already at work. Coupled with this awareness of the one who is a child of peace, as Luke calls it, is the awareness that God is concerned for whole households and communities. The welcome of the person of peace, just may be the start of a movement of a whole community toward Jesus.

Practicing the Kingdom of God

Like the 70/72 we can proclaim that there is another King and his name is the Lord Jesus Christ. Just as there is another king there is another set of values we can proclaim and live for – namely the Kingdom of God. Our job in mission is to go as community to communities, and point people to Jesus through the words we say and the things we do, empowered by the Spirit of God.

Don't give up

It is hard. As Jesus said people will at times receive the message and we are his messengers, a wonderful gospel partnership will take shape. But there will be times when we fail and make mistakes where both our message and we as messengers will be rejected. But what is important is that we remain faithful to the master and continue to try.

Insider Story:

Pray with another person in your congregation about how both you and they can share the message of the Kingdom with someone else.

Ask someone in your church to share his or her story of coming to faith which involved the involvement of another believer. Is there another person in the chain? This could be done in a service, in a small group, or even over morning tea after the service.

Watch DVD clip - Global Interaction cross-cultural worker Jonno provides insight from his setting.

Conclusion:

- Jesus expects his sent followers to share the message of the Kingdom to the towns they go to and the people they meet. When was the last time you shared about your faith to someone else? What is stopping you from sharing something of your faith in the coming two weeks?
- The Kingdom of God is near. How can you bring the Kingdom of God to people in your community?

Take Home:

1. Write out your story of faith. Find someone to share this story with in the coming week.
2. As you pray this week, thank God for the Good News and how the kingdom of God has impacted you and your life. Pray also for those who don't know God and ask that he can reveal himself to them.
3. Choose to give a certain amount of money to an organisation, such as Global Interaction, or a person that helps share the Good News to people who do not yet know Jesus. Make this a practical step this week in helping others hear the Gospel.