

Pentecost 4, July 3, 2022

(Lk 10:1-12; Ps 66:1-9; Is 66:10-14; Gal 6:2, 7-16)

Part I

Hello? Oh, hi, God! Yes, I hear you calling me—what? You want me to read some verses again? Okay, give me a second.

Psalm 66, okay: **Shout with joy to God, all the earth! Sing the glory of his name; make his praise glorious! . . . Come and see what God has done, how awesome his works in our behalf! . . . Praise our God, O peoples, let the sound of his praise be heard.**

Now from Isaiah? **Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad for her . . . for you will delight in her overflowing abundance, for this is what the Lord says: I will extend peace to her like a river. . . and you will be comforted. . . When you see this, your heart will rejoice. . . .**

All right, you want me to read from Luke: **The Lord appointed 72 others and sent them out two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. He said, Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Tell them, *The kingdom of God has come near to you.***

Okay, God, please tell me what this was all about. First you called me, yeah, **come and see**. Then you said to tell them to **rejoice, for this is what the Lord says . . . your heart will rejoice**. Oh, I get it! Now you're *sending me out*. First you called me, then you told me what to say, and now you're sending me out to actually *say* it. – Did I get it right?

What, only *half right*? What did I get wrong? What do you mean, you weren't just talking to me? I have the phone right here in my hand, you dialed my number! -- Ohh-kay. Now I'm supposed to say those things to the whole congregation. I get it.

You know, God, that's a lot harder than just doing it myself. I mean, I'm a pastor, you've already called me and sent me out, and I've been telling them that for 13 (7) years. And I don't think they really get it. . . . Sure. Okay, God, I'll try again. Bye.

Part II

Henri Nouwen, the late great Roman Catholic theologian and priest, wrote these words in a book called *Life of the Beloved*.

*Think of yourself as having been sent into the world. . . a way of seeing yourself that is possible if you truly believe that you were loved before the world began. [God loved you, God created you, God sent you.] . . . As long as you live in the world and [try]to prove to yourself and to others that you are somebody, your life can be scarcely more than a long struggle for survival. But if you really want to live in the world, you can't look to the world itself as the source of your life. . . . Spiritually you don't belong to the world. And this is precisely why you are sent into the world. Your family and your friends, your colleagues and your competitors and all the people you may meet on your journey through life are all searching for more than survival. Your presence among them as the one who is sent will allow them to catch a glimpse of the real life (Nouwen, *Life*, p 105).*

Part III

Jesus tells his disciples, **The harvest is plentiful, but laborers are few.** There are people who don't realize God's kingdom is all around them. There are people who are empty, shame-filled, fearful, people who don't know the love of God.

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There are people who've been put down by churches that preach condemnation instead of love, judgment instead of forgiveness.

There are people who are longing to be accepted, who don't realize God loves them just the way they are and is eager to help them grow into what he desires for them. These are people who've never heard the love of God proclaimed by forgiven sinners like us.

It's up to *us* to let these people know that God is love. *That's* our commission!

From the end of chapter 9, Luke's Jesus stresses the *urgency* of Christ's mission. *Now* is the time to proclaim the good news, while Jesus is among us. *Now* is the time to make choices to follow instead of to stray.

Now is the time to become *apostles*, those who are sent out, instead of being stay-at-home disciples. *Now* is the time to recognize that God doesn't condemn *failure*, but he's not too happy about failure to *try*.

That's our commission! Our task isn't to save souls, but to bring the good news to others in word and deed. *Preach the gospel always; when necessary, use words.* Go and tell what difference Jesus makes in your life. *Declare what God has done for you!*

Thanks be to God!