

# The Urgency and the Joy of the Gospel

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[ 0 : 00 ] Our Bible reading this evening is from Luke chapter 10 verses 1 to 16 and that's on page 1041 of the church Bibles.

Luke chapter 10 starting at verse 1. After this the Lord appointed 72 others and sent them out two by two ahead of him into every town and place where he was about to go.

He told them, the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest therefore to send out workers into the harvest field. Go, I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Do not take a purse or bag or sandals and do not greet anyone on the road. When you enter a house first say, peace to this house. If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them.

If not, it will return to you. Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you. For the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house. When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you.

[ 1 : 13 ] Heal those who are ill and tell them the kingdom of God has come near to you. But when you enter a town and you are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, even the dust of your town we wipe from our feet as a warning to you.

Yet be sure of this, the kingdom of God has come near. I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town. Woe to you, Chorazin.

Woe to you, Bethsaida, for the miracles that were performed in you. If the 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 to the heavens? No, you will go down to Hades. Whoever listens to you listens to me.

Whoever rejects you rejects me. But whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me. Awesome. Thanks, Alan. Thanks, Simon, for reading.

[ 2 : 19 ] What a joy. It's so sunny tonight. Did anyone notice that? Yes, I'm nodding there. Great. Well, if you're visiting tonight, it's great to see you. My name's James. I'm on staff team here at St. Silas.

And tonight's slightly different. We're doing a tri-church service. So you might be new to church. You might have not been to church in a while. Well, and tonight's a great night to find out what it is that Christians believe and just get into what church is about.

The first thing that Christians believe is that if we're to understand and to know God, then we're going to have to ask him to speak to us. And we see that in our passage tonight, don't we? Where he says, The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. So whatever we want in life, whatever we do in life, we should speak and ask our Heavenly Father to help us.

So let's do that now. Father, we thank you for this passage. We pray that you'd give us understanding. We pray that we'd hear it with receptive hearts.

[ 3 : 25 ] May that what is helpful, may that be remembered. And what is unhelpful, may that be forgotten. Amen. Well, on the night that Jesus was crucified in Jerusalem, Jesus said to Pilate and Herod, that's the Jewish and Roman leaders on that day in Palestine, at the end of Luke's accounts, he said, From now on, the Son of Man, and the Son of Man is really Jesus' favorite way of speaking about himself, will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God.

And in saying this, Jesus was saying that he was on the same level as God. He's claiming to be God. And it was quite a claim.

See, at this point in Luke's Gospel, Luke's friends, Jesus' friends, had abandoned him. The crowds that were following him early in the Gospel have left.

All the authorities have rejected him. He's been imprisoned, beaten, and mocked. I wonder what you think of that claim.

What do you make of that claim that Jesus makes? Well, we're going to consider that claim from this passage tonight, and we're going to consider it under three headings there that will guide us.

[ 4 : 54 ] And that's, we're going to look at the urgency of the claim in verses 1 to 9. Then we're going to look at the justice that we see in this claim, verses 10 to 15.

And then finally, we're going to consider the joy of this claim in verse 16. But before we get into that, it's probably helpful to get into the context of Luke.

And we see the context opening up in the start of verse 1, after this. And after this, what is he talking about? He's talking about everything that has happened since Luke 9, 51, where Luke tells us, as the time approached for him, that's Jesus, to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.

Now, I wonder if you noticed where the final destination is in that statement. See, it's not Jerusalem. Jerusalem's only on the way.

But the final destination is heaven, being taken up to heaven, being seated at the right hand of God. But Luke says in order for Jesus to go there, he has to go through Jerusalem.

[ 6 : 11 ] Jerusalem. Why does he have to go through Jerusalem? You see, Jerusalem's where Jesus' friends abandoned him. Jerusalem is where the crowds left Jesus.

It's the place where Jesus died on the cross. Why did he have to go through that agony? Why did he have to go to Jerusalem? The first thing is because of Jesus' status.

You see, Jerusalem is the place where the king of God's people was crowned. If you wanted to be king, you had to go to Jerusalem. And the second thing is regarding Jesus' purpose, why Jesus came.

You see, Jerusalem's not only the place where the king is crowned, so it's not only like Westminster Abbey or Notre Dame for the French or king for us in Westminster Abbey, but it's also the place where the prophets of God were killed.

Listen to what Jesus says about Jerusalem later on in Luke. He says, in any case, I must press on today and tomorrow and the next day for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem.

[ 7 : 22 ] Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you kill the prophets and stone those who sent you, Luke 13. And that's surprising, isn't it? You see, it's the very place where you'd think the people would be most eager to hear from God.

It's the place, it's the center, the heart of God's people, Jerusalem, where the king is crowned. But it's the place that are also the most unfavorable to the prophets.

You see, the folk in Jerusalem were privileged like no one else on earth. They had all the laws.

They had all the commandments. They had God living amongst them. They had the temple. But it's also the place where we see they rejected God the most.

And so if Jesus is ever going to truly rule over God's people, then he is going to have to deal with the rebellion that we see in Jerusalem.

And that rebellion is really just the Bible's word for sin. So if he's ever going to have to fix humanity, if he's ever going to rule it, if he's ever going to give it the world that God wants, then Jesus is going to have to deal with this problem.

[ 8 : 41 ] And notice there that that problem is not one of ignorance. It wasn't as if the people in Jerusalem didn't know of God. It was a problem of attitude. They knew God, but they'd chosen to reject him.

All right, so let's go on and consider the urgency of his claim in verses 1 to 9. And it's an urgent claim because so many people need to hear it.

We all need to hear this claim tonight. Look at verse 2 that I read out earlier. The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send workers out into his harvest field.

And the metaphor that Jesus used there is the metaphor of the harvest. And I wonder if you've ever been to the east coast of Scotland, maybe Montrose, Monifeth, Arbroath area.

What do you know if you go there this time of year? It's just barley and wheat as far as the eye can see. Strawberry fields, maybe, other than golf courses. Yes. And what's the thing you notice?

[ 9 : 42 ] There's just an unbelievable amount of work to be done there. The harvest is plentiful. But it's also an urgent message because there is so little time for people to hear this message.

We will not have forever to respond to this message. We can't put it off indefinitely. There will be a day when we'll have to account for what we've done and said regarding Jesus' claims about what we've heard.

And you might not know if you've ever worked on a farm. Do you go to the harvest field? What do you have to do? Firstly, you have to wait for the grain to get fully ripened, but you don't want it over-ripened.

And then you have to wait for a dry day and a dry couple of days because the grain's going to dry out completely because you can't store it while it's still wet or get so moldy. You might have known that. And so you've got this very little time when you can do the harvest.

And it's literally six weeks, 18-hour days for anyone who's working on the harvest field. You're working as hard as you can go until the harvest is in.

[ 10 : 55 ] And then notice what Jesus goes on to say in verse 4. Do not take purse or bag or sandals and do not greet anyone on the road. When you enter a house, first say, peace to this house.

If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them. If not, it will return to you. Stay there eating and drinking. And whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.

And then when you enter a town and are welcome, eat what is offered to you. So we have to work on the harvest hard. But why does Jesus then go on to tell them, don't take any supplies, don't speak to anyone on the road?

Why does he tell them to not shop around for accommodation or from what they eat? Why?

Because there's no time to waste. No time for chit-chat on the road.

No time to sort out the most comfortable, best accommodation you can or the nicest food, what you agree with and what you don't agree with. You have to get busy with the job that's at hand.

[ 12 : 03 ] And it's urgent because, well, we don't know when we'll die. And we don't know when Jesus will return. So there's two temptations that we might face in this.

We might get distracted and that is we trust, we believe, we're trusting in Jesus but we get distracted by life somewhat. There's busy exams, we've got a busy job, a busy family maybe in the future, lots of distractions, sports, and we get distracted by those.

Or the second thing is we might think that, well, we can put off deciding what we think about this claim. We can think we're just going to delay in deciding what we're going to do about this claim. I'll wait for my friends to make the decision. Well, Jesus hasn't returned and yet, surely there's a little more time before he returns that I can wait.

I went to visit my family back home a couple of years ago and in the middle of the night I was sleeping and I woke up and I was looking through the window and the light from a street lamp was shining through the window and there in the window was a shadow of a man and what he had done was he had stood up and he had climbed on this ledge and he was trying to break in through the window into the house and so what I did I turned on the light and went, wah!

[ 13 : 33 ] and he ran off into the distance but the metaphor that Jesus uses for when he'll return and when he'll come back is like a thief in the middle of the night.

He's not saying that Jesus is a thief but it's unexpected. You never know when it's going to happen. I was there for two weeks and that thief tried to come through.

You never know what it's going to be like so don't get caught unawares. And the final reason why it's urgent is because Jesus' message is urgent.

Look at verse 1. The Lord appointed 72 others and sent them out two by two ahead to every town and place where he was about to go. And then in verse 9 heal those who are ill and tell them what are they to tell them?

The kingdom of God has come near. It's an urgent message and this is the message. Jesus is coming. The king of God's kingdom is coming.

[ 14 : 33 ] The king of the whole earth is returning. He is coming back. God is coming. Well how will we respond to that message? What will we say when Jesus returns?

What will we say when God's kingdom is revealed in all its fullness? Sorry I thought I'd have more time. I would have believed but none of my friends believed.

I could have done more but I've been busy at work. I'm sorry and I had these holidays to go on. What are we going to say? Listen to that claim again.

Jesus was crucified despite all the things that he did despite all his compassion despite all the miracles and claims that Jesus had made about himself.

What does he claim? He says from now on the son of man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God. It's a claim that demands a response.

[ 15 : 41 ] Everything we do in life is lived in the shadow of this claim. How will you respond? Well the next thing that we see is the justice in the claim verses 10 to 15 there.

Now it's my experience and I think I've got a fair amount of experience in this that there's two ways to fail an exam. And the first way is through ignorance.

So try as you might have the best teacher in the world you might throw all your hours into a subject but it just doesn't click for you. Try as you want you're going to fail that exam because you simply don't understand the subject you don't understand the coursework and that's like astrophysics or rocket science or something like that.

It's simply just too difficult. But the other way and this was probably my preferred method of failing exams was through idleness. I know what's going to be in the exam I know what the questions are I've had a great teacher all I had to do is simply rope learn the facts and then what I'd get my mark would be roughly directly proportionate to the amount that I get and I still manage to fail the exam. Why? Because I've been idle. I've put it off. The sun's been shining there's been some cricket or football or something else in the yard going on rather than learning I've gone and hung out with my friends at the beach and ultimately I failed that exam because I'm simply just not too bothered about it and what we have here in Luke in these verses 10 to 15 is a picture of that second way of failing the exam through idleness.

[ 17 : 30 ] You see what Luke is painting a picture of here and what Luke has done throughout his gospel is paint a picture of how people have rejected Jesus not because the coursework was too hard not because they didn't understand what Jesus was about they understood his claims but they simply chose to ignore them and disbelieve them and not pay attention to that claim and so what we see in these verses is the justice of Jesus' game look at verses 13 to 15 woe to you Chorazin woe to you Bethesda Bethsaida for if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon they would have repented long ago they would have believed Jesus' claim long ago sitting in sackcloth and ashes they would have lived a life that reflected their belief and faith but it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you and you

Capernaum you'll be lifted to the heavens no you'll go down to Hades and to our ear to our western ear that sounds a little harsh doesn't it woe woe hang on back up a bit it sounds quite judgmental but let's consider the following where Jesus says woe there it's because he wants them to respond favorably to his claims he's saying there is still time to turn and so that woe there is a graceful thing it's a gracious thing out of love and second why do Chorazin and Bethesda and Capernaum get such a hard time from Jesus because they were all Jewish cities they were cities where the law was preached where they knew the gospel where they had God's word where they claimed the great knowledge of God but instead of rejoicing at Jesus' coming they reject Jesus' coming but Tyre and

Sidon and look what he says about Tyre and Sidon if the miracles were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon they would have repented long ago sitting in sock cloth and ashes those were Gentile cities they had no knowledge of God they had no way of knowing about God but if they had had half the privilege of Bethesda Capernaum and Bethsaida they would have turned to God they would have trusted him they would have said of course Jesus is who he claims to be just look at what he's done and so what we see is the justice of this claim that we're not judged by according to what we don't know but we're judged according to what we do know so think of an accountant or a lawyer or a doctor imagine an accountant embezzled money or a lawyer misrepresented someone in the law or a doctor intentionally hurt someone what would a judge say about them if they did that that would be an outrageous thing because they should have known better an accountant should know not to embezzle and crook the books a lawyer should know what the right use of the law is what justice is a doctor should know the first thing about doctoring first do no harm is that right

I don't think so and it's a lot worse if you know what you should do but you intentionally choose to ignore it you're judged according to what you know not what you don't know and so look at verse 11

what is he going to say yet be sure of this the kingdom of God is coming you see those Jewish towns Bethesda Chorazin Capernaum they claimed to know God they knew the kingdom of God is coming but they choose to do nothing with that knowledge they ignored God and continued living for themselves you see hearing and receiving Jesus' claim is a great privilege it's an enormous privilege to live in a Christian country we know this don't we for many reasons the freedom that we enjoy lots of reasons but with that privilege comes great responsibility to respond according to what we hear and know so the question is not what we do with what we don't know but what will we do with what we know and then finally we go on to consider the joy of Jesus' claim in verse thing verse 16 so let's look at verse 16 again

I'll just read it for us whoever listens to you listens to me whoever rejects you rejects me but whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me hopefully you figure that out slightly what's he saying he's saying that when we hear the gospel when we listen to the bible and believe it and we receive it then we're listening to believing and receiving Jesus and if we believe and receive Jesus then we're believing and receiving God the father in heaven see Jesus' claim is but from now on the son of man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God so think about it if we believe and receive Jesus then it says if we're sitting at the very right hand of God in heaven in glory imagine that how amazing is that the great joy of the gospel that Jesus gives us personal intimate knowledge of God the father brings us into the closest relationship possible with the

[ 23 : 29 ] God of the universe is there greater joy or claim to be made that we can enjoy think of how God the father loved Jesus the son the greatest love that was ever known inside and outside creation when we trust Jesus that's the kind of love that God the father loves us with that should absolutely thrill your heart that's the greatest joy and the greatest happiness you could ever know nothing else will ever satisfy as much as that knowledge and that love what a great joy and a privilege to be promised and enjoyed in Jesus so there we have it the urgency of the claim the justice of the claim and the joy of the claim so what about you it might be that you've come here tonight and things are going well you're enjoying your father you know that you're loved in Jesus you know that you're immensely privileged with that knowledge and with that trust and with that faith well keep going but it might be that you've come here tonight and things have gone well in the Christian life but you're feeling slightly distracted and joyless and guileless slightly and you're not quite sure what's going on well draw near to Christ draw near to Jesus see the joy of the gospel turn turn away from being distracted see that only God and Jesus can satisfy you and thirdly it might be that you're someone here tonight to whom all of this is quite new quite strange well the question is not what we're going to do with what we don't know but what will you do with what you know already what are you going to make with Jesus claim let me close in prayer for us father we thank you for this enormous privilege that you've given us in Jesus we thank you for the great joy in the gospel please help us to respond appropriately in Jesus name amen