



THE HARVEST IS PLENTIFUL

Part 43 of Luke's Gospel: Investigating the Man Who Is God

Pastor Mark Driscoll | Luke 10:1-16 | August 29, 2010

Luke 10:1–16

¹ 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. ² And he said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. ³ Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. ⁴ Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road. ⁵ Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace be to this house!’ ⁶ And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. ⁷ And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house. ⁸ Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. ⁹ Heal the sick in it and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ ¹⁰ But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, ¹¹ ‘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.’ ¹² I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.

¹³ “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. ¹⁴ But it will be more bearable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you.

¹⁵ And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades.

¹⁶ “The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me.”

INTRODUCTION

Howdy, Mars Hill. Today we continue our study of Luke's gospel, investigating the man who is God. And we find ourselves in Luke 10:1–16, where Jesus tells us that the harvest is plentiful.

And this is a very timely word for us as a church. June and July tend to be more leveling-off periods. In theory, the sun comes out. People go on vacation. They take a bit of a break. Beginning in August, things start to stabilize. Attendance starts to increase a little bit. The leadership starts to focus on the fall, and the big push in September and October, when students are back. And so we like to think of this time of year as preparing for harvest time. Our hope, our prayer, our goal is that come September and October, more people would attend Mars Hill Church, more people would meet Jesus, more people would become Christians and see their lives changed by Jesus.

THE HARVEST IS PLENTIFUL

And so, in the providence of God, we find ourselves in our church calendar year with a very timely word from Jesus about harvesting. He begins by telling us, simply, that the harvest is plentiful. In Luke 10:1–2, here's what the Lord Jesus teaches his disciples: “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 laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.’”

Here, Jesus is using language from farming and agriculture. And he's saying that there is a ripe harvest. He is, of course, speaking spiritually. What he is saying is that there are many elect people, many predestined people. There are many pre-Christians who have yet to hear about him. And so God, who is sovereign over the ends, and that is people's salvation, is also sovereign over the means, and that is sending Christians to love and to serve and to speak with non-Christians about Jesus, that the seed of the gospel would take root in their heart and life. That it would cause new growth and new life. That they would become a new person, bearing much fruit in good deeds and faith and love, because of the change that Jesus wrought in their heart, in their life.

And he says that the harvest is plentiful. That too many of us have too small of a vision. That too many churches have too low of an expectation. There can be, for some, a very selfish disposition that Christians, in general, and churches, in particular, exist simply to gather together for friendship, and for fellowship, and for fun. And the truth is that Christians should love one another, and they should live in community, and they should serve one another. But the church exists, in large part, if not primarily, to introduce people who don't know Jesus to Jesus.

And Christians can get very selfish. Sometimes we don't want our church or campus to grow. We don't want to lose our place in the organization as

new opportunities arise. We don't want to relocate our facilities. We don't want to serve passionately or give generously, so that more people would come to know Jesus. And it's a sin to repent of, because, as Jesus says, the harvest is plentiful.

How big of a harvest do you believe there is for Mars Hill Church? How many people, do you think, God could use us to see come to faith, newness of life, eternal life in Jesus?

Now, some of you would ask, "How does this story pertain to me? What's in it for me?" And I would say, it's not about us. It's about Jesus and people who do not yet know him. And that once our lives are oriented toward those two causes and purposes, then we start to have meaning and value and purpose. Because we're not just living absolutely self-absorbed lives and turning the church into the place where our perceived needs are met, but rather, the place we are trained, taught so that we might leave the four walls of the church and bring the love and life of Jesus to others and celebrate in the fact that we have the privilege of seeing other people move closer to Jesus, and some come to faith in him.

SENT AND SENDING

How can this happen? What is the selected strategy that Jesus articulates, that his people would be outward-focused, not inward-focused. And they would have a love for non-Christians and their cities, and that their heart's desire would be to bring the love and truth of Jesus to as many people as possible.

Well, Jesus actually models this strategy himself. He is sent by God the Father. He is God the Son. He is sent into human history. He is sent as a missionary. He says this repeatedly in the gospels, particularly John's gospel where he says, "The Father has sent me." So Jesus is a missionary sent into a time, and a place, and a people, and a culture, and a language to bring the love and the life of God among them.

Jesus is also a sending God. He sends his followers into cities, into towns, into schools, into businesses, into homes, to love, to serve, to seek the well-being of all people, and to see the salvation of as many people as is possible.

And here we read that it begins with him selecting twelve who were disciples, senior leaders. They followed him and were trained by him. And now he adds to their number seventy-two. These are unpaid people. We would use the language, in our modern-day nomenclature, that they are volunteers. They're unpaid, like, perhaps, most of you. They're not getting paid to do ministry. This isn't their job.

In our culture, we would call this a volunteer. This is someone who says, "I want to be a member of Mars Hill Church, or I want to lead a community group, or host a community group, or lead a redemption group, or lead a worship team. Or I want to serve in some capacity. I want to take a portion of my time and I want to specifically designate it for the purposes of God. And I want to volunteer those hours as an unpaid leader and servant to see if my efforts, combined with the efforts of others, couldn't help the mission of God move forward and more people meet Jesus."

What's interesting is we don't know the names of these people, but God knows their names. They're like the many faithful, consistent, godly volunteers in churches, in ministries, who do a lot of hard, difficult work with a good attitude out of love for God. That the Bible doesn't record their names as it does the twelve, but it does tell us that they were specifically bestowed with dignity by Jesus.

They were brought together as a group. They were identified as a group, and then they were sent out two by two. This is always how ministry should be done. That as we're deployed, as we're sent, as we're missionaries scattering, it is good to do ministry two by two, for accountability, to make sure you don't compromise or get into sin, to have another witness, in case there's some false accusation or charge. As well, to work things through, and talk things through, and learn together, and love one another, and build a friendship, and pray together. Of course, if it's a husband and wife, that's a fantastic twosome. In addition, it could be friends working together.

That's why, oftentimes in our ministries, we have a redemption group leader and trainee, community group leader and trainee. We like to pair people up so that they're working together. That's the model of Jesus. Ministry is not to be done by an individual, necessarily, but by a team of people working together.

And he sends them out. And what he tells them is that the harvest is plentiful, that there is great opportunity, that there are many people whom God has already been working on and working in and opening their heart toward Jesus. And they need someone who knows and loves him to come and serve them and speak to them, to answer their questions, and to see them come to a life-saving, eternal, life-giving relationship with Jesus.

Mars Hill, I would just ask you this question, do you believe that there is a great harvest for us? Do you believe that there are thousands, tens of thousands of people that God will save, and to do that, we are sent? Do you believe that?

I was having a meeting recently with Pastor Bill Clem, one of the campus pastors in Mars Hill. And he asked, "Did you ever see this coming?" Mars Hill and people in great numbers, even though we started in our living room with just a handful. I said, "You know, I didn't know what God would do, but yes, I could see that. I saw that there was a great harvest. There was a great opportunity." And he said, "Well, do you feel that there is still a great harvest?" Yes, I do. I can see from ten thousand to twenty thousand people. I can see us doubling. I can see that. That's not beyond my vision. That's not beyond my scope. I have some sense of what that would look like, and how many people it would take and dollars and locations and deployments, systems, technologies. I have an idea. We have an idea. The senior leaders have an idea of what that would take.

And I tell you that, not to be arrogant or boastful or proud, but to tell you that the harvest is plentiful. And if we take Jesus' words to be true, we need to envision a great future. We need to plan and prepare for it. There should be a sense of hope, and enthusiasm, and excitement. That we don't exist just for survival, but we exist for the salvation of others. And there should be a great joy and an anticipation, a sense of urgency and expectation.

When Jesus says the harvest is plentiful, he wants that to resonate in our heart and for us to raise our hand like the seventy-two, and to say, “Well, then I need to find my portion of that work. I want to be a part of what God is doing. I want to see people come to meet Jesus. I want to see lives changed. I want to see generations and legacies altered.” The harvest is plentiful. We are not done.

In fact, I believe we are at the strongest position we have ever been as a church, insofar as leaders, and humility, and unity, and doctrinal agreement, and love for our cities, and the spread of our campuses, and the opportunities that God has opened up. To be honest with you, this is the most exciting season I ever remember in the history of Mars Hill Church. Yeah, money’s tight. Yeah, the economy’s down. Yeah, real estate’s hard to come by. Yeah, some things are difficult, but the harvest is ripe, and we are, like the seventy-two, sent by God to go out and harvest.

Now, most of us have no experience in an agricultural context, but as I understand it, you find a plot of land and the first thing you need to do is clear it, and pull the weeds. And then you need to sow your seed, and you need to water, and you need to tend to your crops. You need to protect it from thieves and from animals. And you wait a really long time, and it’s a lot of labor, and there’s very little visible progress. And then harvest time comes. And it’s exciting and it’s thrilling and there’s life.

Mars Hill, I hope, I trust, I pray that this fall for us will be a harvest season. That we’ll see many people come to Jesus. And the truth is, we have had the greatest harvest in the past year that we have ever had in the history of the church. In the past year, going back roughly twelve months, we’ve grown by about fifteen hundred people. We’ve baptized almost a thousand new people. The harvest was almost a thousand people. That’s wonderful. That’s amazing. We rejoice in every profession of faith. We rejoice in every changed life. We rejoice in every person who has met Jesus. But I do believe that there will be, in our future, an even greater harvest.

PRAY FOR MORE LABORERS

And so what does Jesus tell us? Well, he tells us to pray. Let me give you some things to pray for. That’s exactly what he says, “Pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into the harvest.” That God is at work in our cities, towns, communities, places of business, and schools. And there aren’t enough of his people that are working where he is working, and so we must pray that God’s people would be obedient to God’s call.

A few things to pray for across Mars Hill. We send people out into community groups. There is a very intentional reason why the preponderance of our ministry doesn’t happen at the church. We gather, to be sure, for services, but we scatter for community groups. That we bring people together to worship God and to hear the Word of God and to gather with the people of God, but we scatter people on mission, just as Jesus did. Pulled the seventy-two together, and then sent them.

This is what we do with community groups, exactly what Jesus did. He said, “You each pick a town, you go two by two. You go there and begin a ministry. Do it in a home. See if people won’t gather and come to know me.” Jesus here is launching, to use our language, the community group aspect of his ministry. That’s exactly what he’s doing. He says, “But we don’t have enough leaders. We don’t have enough people. So pray for more.”

So pray for our community groups. At present, we have over four hundred community groups across Mars Hill. By the year’s end, we would like to see at least five hundred, at least five hundred. And so let’s say we need a hundred new community group leaders. We also need apprentices and hosts. Pray for at least three hundred leaders to step up across Mars Hill for community groups, which meet in condos, and dorms, and homes, and apartments, and coffee shops, and places of business. Where people live in community, love one another, serve one another, open the Bible, Christian and non, doing life together, on mission, serving their community.

Pray as well for our campuses. We do send campuses out. Pray for the Ballard campus. After sending lots of people out to start lots of campuses and churches, Ballard is growing again. It’s very strong. It’s doing very well. And we’re just praying for a very big harvest in the fall.

On the West Seattle campus, they’ve got a fantastic building, a great group of people and good elders. But pray for the right campus pastor for West Seattle. Why? Because Jesus says that the laborers are few. We need more leaders. West Seattle is one of those most pressing needs right now. They need a campus pastor.

Pray for the Shoreline campus. They have maxed out their facility, and we’re actually looking at some really exciting opportunities to relocate the Shoreline campus to a bigger location, and then spread it out into a few other campuses. That’s Pastor Steve’s vision, to send Shoreline into a bigger location and then send from Shoreline into multiple other locations. And so our prayer would be, in the next year, to see the Shoreline campus be bigger and plant two more campuses, and send into two new areas.

Pray for the Bellevue campus. Again, the harvest there has been plentiful. That campus is absolutely packed. They can’t get more people in. It’s going really well. We’re very excited. We’re looking for a bigger location, so that they can have a bigger harvest. We may have one. You can pray for the details and whether or not that is God’s choice for us. It’s what we believe is the best choice. We’ll see if all the details come together.

But from there as well, the vision is, on the eastside of Seattle, to send out campuses along the 405 corridor. And as we’ve sent that campus into Bellevue, they have sent out community groups throughout the eastside. And then the community groups are gathering together regionally in the towns, strategizing how to reach those areas, how to have a bigger harvest. And ultimately, to start multiple campuses on the eastside.

So Mars Hill Church sends campuses. Campuses send community groups. Community groups then gather regionally. They ultimately become campuses and/or church plants. And then from there, they send more people out to start more groups and continue the process.

Pray as well for the Downtown campus. They are full, growing very fast. They have seen a great harvest this last year. Lots of people, amazing stories

of salvation and transformation, from drug addicts, to wayward pastors, to people that have never heard about Jesus, to those who are involved in witchcraft, coming to meet Jesus in Downtown Seattle.

And Pastor Tim Gaydos there now has a vision to start pressing further south. And so pray for laborers to go into the Rainier Valley to start community groups. And as those groups grow multiethnic, multiracial, that ultimately, in the next however many years that God wills, that a campus would be opened in the Rainier Valley, and that's his vision and goal. So right now, they're sending leaders into the Rainier Valley. And pray for them.

Pray, as well, for the University of Washington campus. We sent out Pastor Matt Jensen and a handful of leaders, and they sent out community group leaders. And those community groups multiplied and replicated. And so then we started a service on campus at the UW this past year. And they'd had such a great harvest, we actually had baptisms in Red Square at the University of Washington to celebrate the harvest openly and publicly. That campus has grown to be as many as four hundred people.

And, in the providence of God, at the same time that the Supreme Court is rendering a verdict saying that a student group can't discriminate by religious preference or sexual orientation, we were negotiating on a building, a church, one of only two buildings, that I know of, in the last fifteen-plus years that could potentially accommodate us in the University District, walking distance to campus. The price drops. We agree to terms. And now we have an opportunity to open a campus right next to the University of Washington. And had we stayed on campus, in light of the Supreme Court ruling, it may have been almost impossible for us to see a great harvest. And God works out all the timing.

So pray for the University of Washington service as it now becomes a campus. Pray that they'll be able to raise the money, though they're broke college kids, to finish some of the renovation on this building that would allow housing for interns, would allow training, classroom space, worship space, permanently located in the U District, upstream, very important, right next to the school. It's amazing. You send out a few people to start a Bible study, and God blesses that. It becomes more community groups. And then it becomes a service. And then it becomes an open opportunity for a building where young leaders will get trained, and then they will be sent all over the world.

As well, pray for the Olympia campus. Some people from the Ballard campus started a community group in Centralia, and Chehalis, and Olympia, and it became multiple community groups. And they kept sending, sending, gathering, harvesting, harvesting. It culminates in a campus that has now grown. Percentage wise, the Olympia campus is our fastest-growing campus.

Here's what's amazing, all of our campuses that are presently in existence grew in the past year. Every single one had a harvest. And the Olympia campus, by percentage, is growing the fastest. I think the second fastest-growing by percentage might be Downtown. And so what has happened is they have a need for more seats. As they're sending out more community groups, sending out more leaders two by two, like Jesus did, they're seeing a bigger harvest. A good opportunity's opened up at a school where they could have more seats to have a greater harvest, send out more people to start more community groups. And ultimately, I think there's a possibility of additional campuses in the south end of the Puget Sound.

The campus in Federal Way, pray for them as well. With Samuel there, it's growing. It's doing very well. That campus got off to a very strong start, and the harvest there has been very good. And Olympia now is growing and doing very well. And I could even see the need in time for something in or around Tacoma, pulling those three campuses together as a regional strategy to then send out more community groups and more campuses and more church plants because I believe there's a great harvest in that area as well.

And insofar as this issue of leaders is concerned, right now at the University of Washington campus, the Olympia campus, and the Federal Way campus, we only have one elder or pastor at each of those three campuses. Other elders from other campuses are serving and involved. But pray for those three campuses: Olympia, Federal Way, and the University of Washington, that God would raise up, from their midst, qualified, godly, competent, courageous men of God to be pastors and elders, paid or unpaid. Pray for the laborers. Pray for the leaders. Pray for the workers. The harvest is great, and now more leadership is needed.

And that leads to the last campus, which is the Albuquerque campus, which is growing. This summer, the Albuquerque campus is growing. We've never seen a campus grow during the summer. And the Albuquerque campus is growing, and it is almost doubled in the last year. It's up to about five hundred people. A great harvest, multiethnic, bilingual congregation. Spanish subtitles at the second service so that it can be a multilingual, bilingual congregation. That campus is growing. It needs more seats. Again, the harvest has been great, and they've maxed out their space. They're sending out community groups. I was talking to Pastor Dave. Some of these community groups are up to forty, almost fifty people, so they're in the process of multiplying, replicating, sending out new groups and new people two by two, just like Jesus said.

Here's the big idea, this actually works. You get people who love Jesus. You put them together, and you send them out. And then there's a great harvest, and you need more people so you pray for more leaders. Pray for Mars Hill Church. We set a very ambitious goal that we believe, at maturity, it's possible, to one day, by the grace of God if he wills, become a church of maybe fifty thousand people. I still, in my heart, believe that. That's not soon. That's not tomorrow, but this is how it can happen. People going out, sharing the love and life of Jesus, starting groups in homes. Those multiplying, becoming campuses, sending centers, from which more people are sent.

Pray as well for the Acts 29 Church Planting Network. We send out community groups. We send out campuses. We send out church plants. The Acts 29 Network, under the leadership of Scott Thomas, receives about 10 percent of our total dollars. Over three hundred churches now have been planted through Acts 29. We don't take credit for all of those, but we're part of that network. And we house the headquarters here. And we provide the staff for it. And we give over a million dollars a year to it. And over three hundred churches have been planted in the U.S. Now churches are being planted in thirteen different nations, thirteen nations.

Harvest is, what? Plentiful. There is massive opportunity. The globe does not seem that big. The opportunity does not seem impossible, so we need to be praying for leaders, church planters, elders, campus pastors, all the way down to community group leaders. We're praying that Acts 29 would see a number of laborers. This September we've got a boot camp here in Seattle. We're anticipating upwards of a thousand people in attendance. It will be the biggest church-planting event we've ever done. From that, we'll be planting both churches in Acts 29, and campuses in Mars Hill. Right now, we're assessing upwards of five hundred potential leaders who are aspiring to be church and/or campus planters. Our goal is to be at a thousand churches in Acts 29, a quarter million people in maybe six-ish years as a rough timeline.

Some of you say, "Isn't that ambitious? Aren't you being selfish or proud?" No. We believe the Bible. We believe the Bible. We believe the harvest is plentiful. The opportunity is there. But we need to pray for more laborers, for more servants, for more people to serve.

FOLLOW YOUR CALLING

As well, Jesus says to follow your calling. Luke 10:3-9, he tells them as they're going out to do ministry and start their groups and, ultimately, work toward what will become churches, "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 laborer 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.'"

Jesus calls them to a very specific ministry. He tells them to do four things and not do four things. Here's what he says to do, number one, watch out for wolves. Watch out for wolves. And the Bible uses this language, that Jesus is our chief shepherd, senior pastor. The pastors, elders, and leaders are like shepherds. That would include deacons, and community group leaders, and redemption group leaders; shepherds looking after people. The church is like a flock, and individual Christians are like sheep. They need to be led. They need to be fed. They need to be protected. From what? From the wolves.

The wolves are always fighting the shepherds, and they're always trying to ravage the flock, and they're trying to take the sheep. This can be through moral compromise, false teaching, heresy, error. The Bible uses a little line to talk about wolves. It says that they like to draw away disciples after themselves.

See, we're a sending church. We'll send out leaders. We'll send out community groups. We'll send out campuses. We'll send out church plants. We don't mind sending, but wolves are not about sending. They're about taking. Not with the permission of the leadership of the church, not with the blessing and partnership and friendship of the leadership of the church, where people are being released to go work with that person. Because they're a wolf, and the shepherds know it's a wolf. So they want to protect the sheep.

So what the wolf will do is try to manipulate through lies, or false teaching, or emotional appeal, or friendship, or service, or hospitality. Things that could be used in a godly way for the gospel are used in an ungodly way in opposition of the gospel, so that the wolf can just one at a time, take the sheep and get them away from the shepherd, and the flock, and the chief shepherd. Draw them away. To what? To use them, to abuse them.

And so there are wolves that are moral wolves that want you to compromise your holiness. There are wolves who are doctrinal wolves that want to have you compromise the truth of sound doctrine. They'll start to get you to question certain teachings in the Bible. Cult leaders are like that as well. There are those who are also just power wolves. They want to be in control. They want to be in authority. They want to be in charge. They're very suspicious and skeptical of any shepherd, and they just want you to treat them as if they were a shepherd.

And what's curious, as well, is this language is still very common in, particularly, the Middle East. Some of the men on staff with me went there to film, for example, in Pakistan some years ago. And they report that to this very day, to call someone a wolf is a paramount offense. It is very offensive. They were witness to one conversation where a man was told, "You're a liar, and a thief, and a cheat, and you have no character. You're just a wolf." And that was what set him off. "Don't call me a wolf." That's the highest insult.

So Jesus here is saying, "These false teachers, these false leaders, they're nothing but wolves. I can't give them a higher insult. I can't give you a stronger warning." And this also includes the fact that you will be mocked, you'll be opposed. You'll be made fun of. You'll be rejected. This can be certain degrees of emotional, or if it's business-related, financial suffering. This escalates all the way to martyrdom. What happens when a sheep goes before a wolf is that the wolf destroys the sheep.

So Jesus says, number one, watch out for the wolves. Number two, seek the peace and salvation of everyone. That's what he says. Anyone you meet, any home you go to, try to bring peace. And the peace here is the peace of salvation. It's peace with God, that we are, by nature, at war with God. We are at hostility with God. We're in sin against God. Talk to them about Jesus, love them. Tell them, you know, God is not pleased with who you are and how you live. But there is peace to be had between you and God through the Lord Jesus Christ. That he is God who loves you, and he came and lived as you should live and he died as you should die. And he rose to love, even though you were ill-deserving. And that through Jesus, the sin and the hostility and the animosity between you and God can be removed, and there can be peace from you and God.

So Mars Hill, as you go, as you go to work, as you go to school, as you go shopping, as you go to your neighborhood, don't be those rude, annoying Christians. But be those loving Christians who are seeking to bring the love and the life of Jesus' peace between people who don't know God and God who loves them.

Number three, he says, receive whatever income God gives. He says, "Don't bring money. Don't bring your wallet. Don't bring your credit cards.

Don't bring your purse. Don't bring your ATM card. Don't, don't. Don't bring anything. Just go. Go to a town—you two go to a town and just show up, and assume that the Holy Spirit went ahead of you. And assume that God's working on somebody's heart, and strike up some conversations and see if somebody doesn't open their home to you. And talk to them about Jesus, and eat whatever they feed you. And share the love of Jesus with them. And if they come to faith, start a community group in that home. And if that community group is flourishing and those people want to give you a little money as a salary, take whatever salary they give."

Number four, heal the sick and make the invisible kingdom visible. If they're sick, pray for 'em. "God, demonstrate your power. Demonstrate your life and your love. Let this person know that you are the great physician." Pray for the sick. Also, this would include casting out, for those who are suffering from demonic oppression or possession, casting out those evil spirits, saying, "You know, those voices you hear, that spirituality you're in, that witchcraft you enjoy, that suffering that you endure, those voices that you hear, particularly if they're 'you, you, you,' those are accusations. Those are condemnations. You have an enemy. He's opposed to you. God is the real God. Those are counterfeit gods. Those are false spirit beings to lead you astray and harass you. Let me pray for them and see if you don't get healed. Let me pray for you. And in the name, the strong name of Jesus, command everything and everyone, except for the Holy Spirit, away from you. And let's see what God does. Let's see if the invisible kingdom is made visible in your life."

Jesus says to do these things. Watch for the wolves. Seek the salvation of everyone. Receive whatever income God gives. And by all means, seek to heal the sick and pray for those who are suffering.

He also says four things not to do. "Don't bring money, supplies, or even an extra pair of shoes." That's what Jesus had said. When you're going on a long journey in that day, you'd usually pack an extra pair of shoes, unless you were exceedingly poor. In case your first pair of shoes wore out, you're walking along the road, you'd bring another pair of shoes just in case. Jesus says, "Don't bring any supplies. Don't even bring an extra pair of shoes."

Number two, don't get distracted with idle chitchat. He says, "As you're walking along on the road, don't get tied up in these really long, complicated, unnecessary conversations." Don't. See, the formal greeting on the road, in that day, it could take hours. What he's saying is, you don't want to just have long, drawn-out conversations. It's not a sin to have friendships. It's not a sin to be patient with people. But in this occasion, he's saying, get to know someone. "I'm a Christian. I'd love to talk to you about Jesus. You have no interest in that? Great, let me go talk to this guy."

All right, if it's harvest time, you're looking for the low-hanging fruit. "You want to talk about Jesus? If I give you a Bible, you're willing to read it?" I mean, there is a list of people I've talked to in the past few months, like, "Okay, if I give you a Bible, will you read it?" "No." "Okay, well, if I give you a Bible, will you read it?" "No." "If I give you a Bible, will you read it?" "No." Couple of people, "If I give you a Bible, will you read it?" "Yeah, I'd love one. I just don't know which one to buy. I don't know Jesus, and I don't know the Bible, but I'm willing to read it. Can you give me a good one?" Oh, you're kidding, okay. There's the low-hanging fruit. There's the low-hanging fruit.

Jesus is saying, harvest the low-hanging fruit first. See, 'cause there are people who are very, very, very far from faith. There are others who are closer. God's already working on them. They're already in process. They're already asking good questions. They're already open to helpful answers. And he's not saying ignore those people, but pick the low-hanging fruit first.

Who in your life, isn't that far away from faith? Who in your life, let me ask you this, who in your life, if you just ask them, "Do you want to go to church with me," they would go? You know what you should do? Ask them. How many people in your life, if you bought them a Bible, a nice one, don't go cheap. A nice ESV Study Bible, I would recommend. You gave it to them as a gift. You say, "I really love you, and I'm not trying to be pushy or rude. But I really love the Bible and I love you. And so I went out and spent a lot of money, and I got you a nice leather-bound gift. And maybe you should start in Luke. And if you dig it, come to church with me." Who, if you gave a Bible to, they'd start reading it? If you invited them to church, they would come? Who would attend your community group if you just asked?

Some of you say, "Well, I don't want to be opposed." Well, you will find a few wolves. You will get a little opposition. You will also find a lot of low-hanging fruit. Many people, statistically, if not most people, who come to faith in Jesus, they were invited to a group or a service by someone who loved them. And all you need to do is ask.

But, number three, don't waste your time. You've got that one friend who wants to argue all the time. Love them, invest a little time, but find the other people who are already a little further along and a little more open. He says as well, "Don't waste time on people who oppose you and reject salvation." If they just want to argue and they want to fight and they're hostile and they're opposed, it's not that you ignore them or don't love them, but you pray for them and you invest your time in people who are non-Christians, but they're close. Or they're new Christians and confused.

And if you don't know who those people are, tell your campus pastor, "I got time. I want to meet with people. As the visitor cards are filled out, as the new people come, put me to work. Let me go talk to them." You know what actually happens? Some people show up and they check a box, "I'm interested in becoming a Christian." That's pretty low-hanging fruit. Volunteer to go meet with them, if you don't have people to already meet with.

And number four, he says, don't move around. Find a place where somebody comes to know Jesus. They love him and they say, "My home now belongs to Jesus. I want to use it for ministry." And then Jesus is essentially teaching, have a community group there. You guys pray. Study Scripture. Serve one another, love the community. See where the visible needs are. Help those who are suffering. Feed those who are hungry. Turn that house into a little outpost to the kingdom of God, and let the love and light of God shine forth from the life of the people who gather there. It's a community group.

And he says, don't move around. People can't find you. It's too confusing. Too complicated. Do ministry there. Then you can imagine, as that home fills up and they don't fit, well, then you start a group, and you start a group, and you guys open your house. And then as those fill up, well then we

multiply, send you out, more people open their homes. This is multiplication of ministry effectiveness.

But here's what needs to happen: you need to be willing to let your community group be split. You need to be willing to have an adjustment in your relationships, otherwise it's like Peter, James, and John up on the mountain with Jesus, and Moses, and Elijah. It's like, "We don't want to be sent. We don't want to be scattered. Let's just be a community group up on the mountain forever." Jesus says, "No, it's not gonna work like that. We need to come down and scatter. We gotta get ministry started in other places."

Friends, if you're a Christian, your home belongs to Jesus. A community group should be meeting there, and you should be open to the fact that there will be a harvest, more people will come, and you're gonna need to split that group and send people out. And those of you that are in those groups, you've gotta take it as a real honor, not a burden. "Man, I get to be like one of the seventy-two. Me and somebody else, the host or the assistant, we're gonna go start another group. We're gonna open our home. We're gonna see the harvest of the kingdom of God on our couch. On our couch, we're gonna see the kingdom of God. We're gonna see people go from death to life. We're gonna see generations and legacies altered on our couch." Just so you know, that's why God gave you a couch.

And this is how Jesus worked. He worked from homes. When he was in Capernaum, he was at Peter's house. When he goes to Jerusalem, he sets up base of operations at Mary, Martha, and Lazarus' house in Bethany. The early church met from house to house. They also met at the temple courts. They got together, as we do, for services, for large meetings. So they gathered for worship and Lord's Table, Communion, and preaching, and singing, and loving. But then they scattered into their homes. This is exactly how Jesus establishes ministry.

We're trying to build our ministry on the model of Jesus. He would bring in thousands of people to hear him preach. And then he would send them out, two by two, to start community groups in their homes. We are trying, in our modern-day equivalent, to do the exact same thing that Jesus did, to obey exactly what Jesus said. And Jesus says, "If you do this, you get a," what? You get a harvest. People get saved. Lives change. Campuses get started. Groups multiply and replicate. There's fruit. Things happen.

And some of you would say, and I just, I feel inclined to say, some of you would say, "Yeah, but I really don't like change." Look, there are two kinds of change, growth and death. Every ministry has one kind of change or the other. Harvest and growth cause change. Death and decline cause change. The question is not, will we have change? The question is, will it be harvest change or funeral change? Harvest is the kind of change we want.

LUKE 22

Now, here's the question: is this how we're all supposed to do it? Well, I would say, principally, going out, homes being opened, groups being started, for sure, because that's consistent. We see it in the book of Acts. We see it throughout the New Testament. This becomes the paradigm for the church. But what about the, "Hey, don't bring your purse and don't bring your wallet. And don't worry about an extra pair of shoes and don't bring a lunch." Is it a sin for someone to have support or resourcing in ministry? Not necessarily. Again, it's follow your calling.

A little later we read this, same book, Luke. Same man, Jesus, God-man, says this in Luke 22:35-36, "And he said to them, 'When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?'" He's back to the section in Luke 10. Okay, it's a little while later, some months later, he says, "Okay, remember months ago when I first sent you guys out, I told you not to bring any supplies. You remember that?" "Yeah, we remember that." "Did you lack anything or did God provide?" They said, "We lacked nothing." "He said to them, 'But now let the one who has a moneybag take it.'" "Now don't forget your purse. Bring your credit cards. Grab your wallet." "'And likewise, a knapsack.'" "Pack some supplies and get a lunch." "'And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one.'" While you're at it, get a weapon. Well, this is a different way to deal with wolves. Jesus is like, "I sent you out as sheep among the wolves. Now I'm sending you out as warriors among the wolves."

Some of you say, "Well, what is this, a contradiction?" No, it's different callings. He sent them out on one occasion with a certain set of orders. He sends them out on another occasion with a different set of orders. This is just good leadership. This is Jesus surveying the circumstances and the need and saying, "For this mission, this is the best plan. For this mission, we'll need an entirely different plan."

When he sent them out with no supplies, I think it taught the seventy-two to depend on God. "God loves me, God will provide for my needs." And Jesus says, "Did that happen?" They say, "It did. God did provide for my needs."

In addition, for those who were the new Christians, it taught them to serve and to give. These are two very important things 'cause we live in a consumer culture, not a Christian culture. A Christian culture's about serving and giving. "I want to help. I want to contribute." A consumer culture is, "I want to be served. I want to receive." A consumer culture's about me. A Christian culture's about others. The longer you've been a Christian and not given or served, the more selfish, the more carnal, the more fleshly, the less devoted, the more critical you will become. And so I believe in this, not only was it teaching the seventy-two to trust God for provision, it was also teaching the new Christians to give and to serve.

Let me ask you, where do you serve? How much do you give? Where do you serve? How much do you give? See, these people who open their homes, they'd been Christians for fifteen minutes, and they became community group hosts. And they were supposed to open their home, pay for the ministry, invite people in, serve them, feed them, love them, house them, and help raise support for the leader's salary, whatever that might be, small or large.

So we're to pray for laborers, and we are to compel God's people to be sacrificial servants and generous givers. But on this occasion, Jesus is saying, "Pretty soon, I'm gonna be put to death, and I'm going to be killed. And things are gonna get very hard. So for this mission, pack supplies. For this mission, pack a sword. For this mission, be prepared." There are times that God will send people out, completely on faith with no provision, and he will provide. There are other times that God will send people out with lots of resourcing and supplies. Both are fine. It depends on what the Holy Spirit

wants for that mission.

And when we started Mars Hill, to be honest with ya, it was pretty much like Luke 10, not Luke 22. Grace and I were broke, fresh out of college, newly married. We had no support. We had no funding. We had a small core group that was giving a very small amount of money. I worked a job. Grace worked a job. We didn't get any money. We couldn't afford a place to meet, so we got a free room to meet in at a church. We worked jobs. We just started with nothing. We didn't have projectors. We didn't have a sound system. We didn't have chairs. We didn't have a web site. We didn't have anything. We didn't have a bank account. We didn't have a dollar. We didn't have anything. Like Luke 10, we said, "We got nothing, but Jesus said to go."

So Grace and I, there's the two of us, this is what we're gonna do 'cause that's Jesus' calling on our lives. And along the way, God did provide. He provided a place to meet. He provided chairs to sit in. Over time, he provided sound equipment. And somebody built a web site, and it starts to go as God's people serve and give. Antioch Bible Church kicked in a little money. And then all of a sudden, I started to get a small salary for the first few years 'cause the church couldn't afford to pay me. And I don't think I got any money from the church for three years. There wasn't any money.

It was a lot like Luke 10, but now a lot of what we do is more like Luke 22. If we're gonna start a campus, if we're gonna start a church, if we're gonna send people out, you know, if our people, we have so many of them, are good givers and servants, we should be able to send them out with a little support. But sometimes, we just still send people out with nothing. Go start a community group. "How much money do I get?" You get nothing. "Well, what supplies do I get?" We love you. We'll pray for you. We'll train you. Go start your community group. You guys pay for it. You open your home. You figure it out, because you belong to Jesus and that's his couch and that's his house.

And so it's different resourcing for different mission. I want you to see this. Otherwise, some of you are young and idealistic and you'll say, "Okay, well, it's a sin to pack a lunch. It's a sin to wear shoes. It's a sin to have a plan." No, it all depends on God's calling. And here, early on in Luke, the calling was to trust God and for the Christians to be generous givers and faithful servants.

EXPECT IT TO GET UGLY

Jesus then closes by saying, expect it, at some point, to get ugly. "But whenever," Luke 10:10–16, "But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you—" You talk about Jesus and they don't like you, "Go into its streets," make it public, "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 your town." That's an Old Testament town that God destroyed. "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon," two godless cities in the Old Testament that Isaiah and others rebuked, "They would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes." Just showing how repentant they are. "But it will be more bearable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Capernaum," Peter's hometown where Jesus did ministry, "Will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades. The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me."

Jesus is saying here that he's functioning like an Old Testament prophet. The prophets would say, "Woe to you. Woe to you. Woe to you." And they would call people to repentance, and they would call God's judgment on the unrepentant. And Jesus comes here as a strong prophet and he is saying that towns and cities, they have an opportunity to respond to him. And if not, woe to them.

He is God. He is King. He is Lord. He is Judge. And that we will all stand before him. And so the Father, he is saying, sends him, God the Son. And then God the Son sends the Christians. And if towns and cities and people reject the message, they reject the invitation of salvation. They reject the opportunity to repent of sin. They reject the opportunity to come to faith in Christ and to be born-again as Christians. Then woe to them, judgment is on them. Hell awaits them. Torment awaits them because God has offered peace, and they have chosen war, and that is a battle they cannot win.

And he's saying that for some towns and people, the judgment will be harsher. For example, Capernaum, he says, "There's no excuse for you. Peter lived there. I lived there. We started a community group in his house. You were all invited to come. I was teaching and you didn't listen. So your judgment will be more strict and harsh than those who have had less opportunity."

Let me ask you this: if there are really only two categories of people, those who reject Jesus as God, Savior, and Christ, and those who receive him as God, Savior, and Christ, which are you? Do you reject or receive Jesus? Do you reject or receive Jesus? And for those of you who live in this day, where you can turn on the radio, hear a sermon. You can log on to the Internet, download Bible teaching. You can get a free copy of the Bible. Pick one up on your way out. We're glad to give you one. You could go to a church and it costs nothing. Unlike a movie theater or a concert or a sporting event, you can go to church for free. You can go to community group for free. You can get good Christian books for cheap. In a day when there are innumerable opportunities to meet Jesus and learn and grow, if you reject him, how harsh will your hell be?

I tell you that 'cause I love ya and I'm worried about ya. But God has given so much opportunity to so many. But let me end on a positive note. The harvest is what, Mars Hill? It's plentiful. There are lots of people that are gonna receive Jesus and not reject him, and not experience war, but blessing, and enjoy, in the language of Jesus, peace with God. And he has sent us, and he has sent you. And we need more leaders, so let's pray for laborers.

Lord Jesus, we do thank you that you were sent on a mission by the Father to seek and save those of us who were lost. We thank you that not only are you a sent God, you're a sending God who sends us on the same mission, to bring the good news of your person and work to as many as possible. Thank you that you send us out two by two. I pray for those, right now, Lord God, that you'll be stirring in their heart what their calling is, what their ministry is, what part of the harvest they are to serve in. Jesus, it's wonderful we get to be a part of what you're doing. We get to see lives changed. We get to see people meet you, become family, brothers and sisters. We get to see them forever. We get to rise from death and spend forever with the people

that we enjoy seeing come to faith through the harvest. So God, I pray for our campuses. Pray for our leaders. Pray for our people. Pray for opportunities. Pray for our fall. Pray that we would serve passionately and give generously and that, Lord Jesus, you would keep before us, this great vision of a magnificent harvest, because we believe the Bible, the harvest is plentiful. But also the workers are few, so God, we're asking, send more laborers so we could see a bigger harvest. And send some of the people who hear this message. Amen.

[End of Audio]

Note: This sermon transcript has been edited for readability.