

The Divine Treasure Hunt

A Study of Luke 10

For anyone interested in mission, it's hard to go past the account of Jesus sending out the 72 in Luke 10 and the implications this passage has for us as modern day disciples.

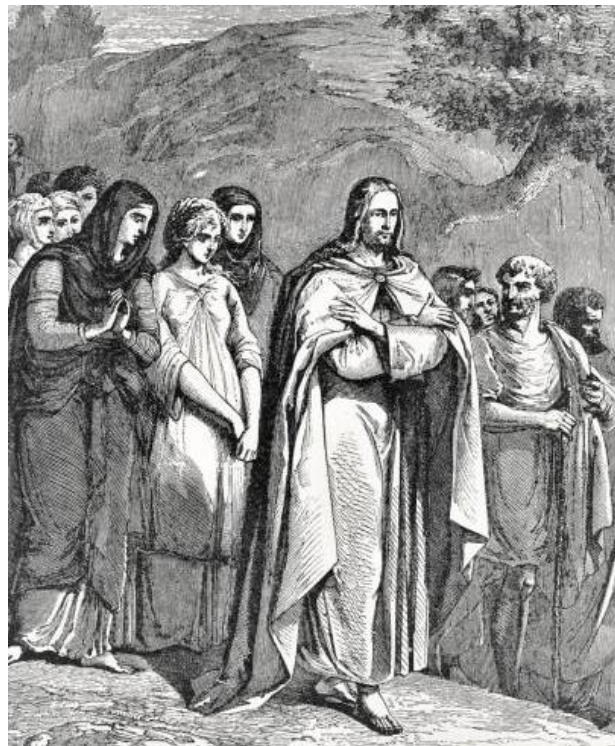
Luke 10: 1-9 (NIV)

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. ² He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. ³ Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. ⁴ Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.

⁵ "When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' ⁶ If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you.

⁷ Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.

⁸ "When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you. ⁹ Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'



This chapter in Luke marks a change in Jesus' ministry approach as he involves a wider group of disciples to announce the kingdom. The instructions they receive are clearly applicable to us as we embrace the 'great commission'.

The passage addresses two challenges:

- How we prepare to go
- How to act when we arrive

Instructions as we prepare to go. (Luke 10:1-4)

Initially Jesus directs our attention to the 'Lord of the Harvest' and his harvest field, making it clear who is directing this mission. (in case we forget)

The Lord may indeed be in control, but he immediately involves us in prayer to activate a response and to be willing to partner in this great adventure.

Then he launches us with the words "Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves" and just in case that sounds challenging he adds 'Take no bag, purse or (extra) sandals'

Alan Roxburgh reflects on this command to 'travel light' saying "When Jesus says take nothing with you in Luke 10, he is in part calling disciples to move from doing things **for** people to being **with** people in the neighbourhood and receiving **from** them"

This is a journey of total dependence on Jesus for protection and provision and a challenge to our western 'modus operandi' to be well trained and resourced. It is also a challenge to the posture of always being the 'giver' (which often leaves us in control).

As we go, there is one further instruction '*Do not greet anyone on the road*'

This sounds counter-intuitive but is necessary in middle eastern culture when greeting someone might turn into a lengthy stay.

'*Do not greet anyone on the road*' speaks of a resolute purpose to spend time where Jesus wants us and not get sidetracked.

Instructions for when we arrive - Finding the 'person of peace'. (Luke 10:5-9)

The essence of Jesus mission strategy centres on the 'person of peace'.

These are people the Holy Spirit has been 'ripening' and who are thirsty for the truth.

My experience is that God calls some unlikely characters – they are often people who have sinned enough to know they need a Saviour.

If it was left to us, we would probably build the Kingdom with respectable people, but God delights to redeem the broken.

The first time Jesus reveals that he is the Messiah is to a person like this – he could see the soft heart of the Samaritan women and how she would immediately share the message of salvation with her neighbours.

So, if people like this are central to God's mission strategy – how do we find them?

Jesus gives us clear instructions in verses 5-9 to help us!

Patrick Keifert covers this so well that I'd like to quote his comments in full.

*Jesus sends out missionaries into the abundant harvest that belongs to God.
The task Jesus sets the workers is one of discernment.
They are to look for what has become known as 'people of peace' (Lk 10 v 5-6)
How will they know who is a person of peace? How will they know which places God is at work in?
These are the ones who will **offer** them hospitality.
The first task of the missionaries is to **receive** hospitality from strangers.
They are told to 'eat what is set before you' – and the message is repeated to give it even greater force (v7-8)
Once people of peace are identified through the hospitality they offer, the missionaries eat, heal the sick and announce the kingdom.
They do not take it (the kingdom) with them, it is already 'at hand' rather than 'in hand'.
We can conclude therefore that **the future of the church is dependent upon the hospitality of the world.***

Patrick Keifert / Nigel Rooms (Forming a Missional Church – Chapter 5)

Patrick's final statement here is confronting, but I'm inclined to agree that we can't build the church by focusing internally.

If finding these people of peace is our task, we need to go with an expectation that God is already working in the hearts of people in our environment – preparing them to receive us (and our message).

When I am living with this expectation, it's like I'm on a **'treasure hunt'** every day.

The passage is full of 'gems', but let's look closely at some of the instructions Jesus gave to help the disciples connect to the right people.

I see 4 key steps in this section (Lk 10 v5-9).

These steps (that unfold in sequence) have shaped my approach to mission for many years.

The sequence could be summarized as: **Bless, Eat, Heal & Tell.**¹

Bless

⁵ *Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house.'*

As the disciples approach people, they were to greet them with 'Shalom'. A Hebrew word that speaks of profound peace rooted in wholeness, health, safety, and prosperity. (English translations usually just use the word *peace*)

The message of the Kingdom is the peace that comes because Jesus has paid the price (to restore us back into relationship with God).

We assure people that everything is okay – because God loves them and has dealt with sin!

Verse 5 includes the statement **'first say'** and this shapes our attitude. It suggests we go with a 'posture' to bless before we even know the person.

I find this tremendously freeing – as I don't need to be a spiritual detective weighing up every situation to decide who deserves a blessing. As God's offer is for all, I can be curious rather than judgmental.

When we obey this first instruction people are more likely to respond as they sense we care about them.

We could literally say 'bless you' or 'peace be with you' as we interact with people, but there are also ways to signal a blessing just with eye contact and warm body language.

Our objective remains to *'find the Person of Peace'* and our offer of blessing is like a sonar ping that will resonate with the people who are open. (*If a person of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you - Luke 10v6*)

Patrick Keifert points out that our task is discernment – in other words, to find out what God is up to and join him. Our primary focus is not on people (we are seeking to convert) – but on the Lord so he can use us in his bigger work of salvation.

Eat

⁷ *Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the labourer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house.* ⁸ *Whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat what is set before you.*

This part of the sequence takes the most time as we dwell with people for a while.

Jesus speaks now of hospitality and assumes that the open-hearted person will invite us into their home (and feed us). This is typical middle eastern hospitality, but unfortunately not so common in western

¹ It is difficult to 'tell' someone about the Lord without building on the first three steps

culture. In our case we need to get creative to find a way to enter into the world of the receptive person (even if we are not entering their home).

Our treasure hunt is happening in the everyday (even mundane) situations.

One example of this (for me) happens with my hairdresser. Every few weeks I catch up with my Syrian hairdresser Najim (a Muslim of refugee background). Each time I arrive, I approach him with a 'blessing' and (God-breathed) interest in his life. By about the third haircut the conversation has gone deeper as he 'reveals' heart concerns that begin to move towards spiritual things. I feel like I am entering Najim's world, and he is glad to see me. In a sense he is 'hosting' me in his barber's chair.

This 'hospitable space' in our western context is found in the places people linger – the places where conversations can happen. Your daily treasure hunt may take you to park benches, shopping malls, coffee shops, community centres (the Lord will show you.)

Jesus chatted at a well in Samaria and Paul met Lydia in a park by the river.

My wife and I got talking to a neighbour recently as she watered her front garden (a person we didn't know). An echo came back from our 'blessing' which hopefully will lead to further conversation with Mary-Anne. Curiously, I have passed this house a few times and see that they regularly offer valuable items on the sidewalk for free. (a typical person of peace)

Receiving from the person of peace

Have you noticed 'who is feeding who' in Luke 10?

Remember Pat Keifert saying that our task is to receive.

Do I 'need' the person I am relating to in any way or am I doing all the giving?

Jesus sends us out 'with no bag' requiring us to be receptive and respectful of people we meet. Shedding our control and (subtle) sense of superiority can be surprisingly difficult.

So, getting back to our 'sequence' (bless, eat, heal, and tell).

While we are '*eating what they give us*' (respectfully engaging) we are **incubating honesty**.

This is where trust develops, and people open up about their real concerns.

I see this 'confiding of concerns' as crucially important if we are to introduce the Kingdom.

The sharing of these life concerns is the opportunity for us to give people a taste of heaven (the next development in the sequence).

We were at an extended family gathering recently and a cousin (who has been estranged from the Lord) suddenly opened up about a cancer scare. It was risky honesty after decades of 'small talk'. I have been praying for him since the gathering and asking the Lord for some way to apply grace to his hurting heart.

Heal

⁹ ***Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'***

In simple terms this is the moment when we engage people in their point of need in a way that links to God's love for them.

You could say this is an exercise of 'show and tell'.

These days people may go to doctors for basic health care, but they still worry about life threatening or chronic health problems. In Luke 4, Jesus also refers to healing the broken-hearted and delivering the captives. We can pray for the whole human condition here.

The important thing is that we are showing people that Jesus is a person, not just a philosophical idea.

(Some would say that 'Heal the sick' is a mandate to address all sorts of social ills – but I sense the purpose here is to point people to the Kingdom, not just to care for people)

Recently I got talking with a Malaysian man who spoke of his shame about having an affair. He was Buddhist and felt his failure had affected his son who was suffering chronic asthma and allergies. (Most people who don't know Jesus are working out some sort of karma)

We had been talking about Jesus – and I just sensed a prompting to say, "Let's pray and ask Jesus to heal your son as a sign that he has forgiven you for the affair". ²

Essentially, we are introducing people to an unseen person, and this is the moment they can 'touch' him and experience that it's true.

Jesus demonstrated the power of the Kingdom through healing etc, and he gives the disciples the authority to do the same. ³

You may not have faith to pray for a miracle, but we can act in ways to show people how Jesus cares for them (enough to die for them)

Tell

⁹ *Heal the sick who are there and **tell them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'***

The Kingdom is all about the King!

So, we simply point to Jesus and acknowledge that everything we have done is because of him. In the words of John the Baptist "he must increase while we decrease"

Our 'mission' has been to introduce people to Jesus, and initially they have encountered him in us. Our loving actions have stirred their heart to ask questions like:

- Why does this person care about me?
- Why are they peaceful when the pressure is on?
- Why do I feel better just being in their presence?

We could remain in this phase enjoying the relationship and keep people depending on us, but the time is ripe to go deeper and invite people to relate to Jesus themselves.

I remember a time we were visiting some Syrian friends. The lady of the house was sick in bed, so my wife joined several women who were comforting her.

As they sat on the bed together, Beverley felt to tell them the story of the woman who touched the hem of Jesus garment (and was healed).

The Muslim women were fascinated that the 'important' man would respond lovingly to a 'lowly' woman, and they asked: "can we pray to Jesus too?" The answer is yes!

² *This conversation was a one-off and so I don't know the outcome of that prayer – some things will only be revealed in heaven*

³ *It's easy to conclude that the time of miracles has passed (for some reason) & dismiss the possibility that God would answer prayer in a dramatic way. If we don't expect an answer, we are not likely to pray boldly.*

Jesus is the very embodiment of the Father's love. The one who embraces the lost son.

He is also the King and each of us must decide to follow or reject him.

Our time with the person of peace has clarified the question and brings them to a point of decision about his lordship.

As the Luke 10 account unfolds, Jesus encourages the disciples to press on even when some reject the King. We are to dust ourselves off and continue that treasure hunt.

A Wonderful Postscript (Luke 10: 18-21)

One of the reasons this passage is so interesting is that Jesus reveals what is happening in heaven while the earthly actions unfold.

Look at what he says in v21 after the disciples return.

²¹ *At that very time He **rejoiced greatly** in the Holy Spirit, and said, "I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight."* NASB

It's no exaggeration to say that Jesus is exuberantly joyful ⁴ at what transpires, and his prayer reveals the Father and Holy Spirit joining in the heavenly celebration. Astonishingly, Jesus also says in v18 that he saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Clearly something 'big' is happening here.

Hopefully this whets your appetite to look at the passage closely!

What happened that caused Jesus to react like this?

Jesus gives us a clue in v21 when he describes these 70 as 'infants' – Obviously they weren't literal toddlers, but people who were simple and humble of heart – who were open to God's wisdom.

Jesus confirms that this is how the Father wants the Kingdom to operate.

Paul takes up the theme with statements like: *God chose the weak and foolish things of this world to confound the wise* (1 Cor 1:27)

It's a work of grace that we become a person who can enter the kingdom like a little child and put aside our instinct to be sophisticated (wise in our own eyes).

Was Jesus rejoicing that these 70 un-named humble workers went out as the first example of the movement which becomes the church and *goes into all the earth*?

Is it possible he still rejoices as we go?

⁴ Commentators point out that this is the only (recorded) time in the gospel accounts that Jesus is depicted rejoicing like this. (The literal translation is 'thrilled with joy'). Anyone who loves Jesus should be moved by this and motivated to follow the example of these 70.