

The Harvest Luke 10:1-4

I. INTRODUCTION • RR

A. *The Season of Harvest*

1. For months after the business moved in next door, there were maybe 1 or 2 cars parked there during the week; many days, there were none at all.
 2. And it was great because we used their lot for our parking on Sundays.
 3. We were wondering what business it was that had such little traffic.
 4. But for the last month, their parking lot has been full and they've been using ours, with shifts running round the clock.
 5. They box strawberries – and this is the season of harvest.
 6. So they've hired dozens of people and the place is hopping.
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7. There's still a lot of agriculture that goes on in Ventura County.
 8. You don't have to go far to find yourself driving on a road that borders a field.
 9. And for most of the year, those fields are empty of people.
 10. But when the produce ripens and the time for harvest has come, then the fields are jammed with workers.
 - a. The owner of the field knows that he has a limited time to reap.
 - b. If he doesn't gather it quickly, it spoils and the crop is ruined.

B. *The Spiritual Harvest*

1. That was the lesson Jesus sought to teach in this passage.
 2. But the harvest *of souls* isn't seasonal; it's *continual*.
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3. A church wanted to let the community know they were loved, so they put a simple message on their sign, under which was listed the service time. The sign read -

We Care About You
Sundays 10 a.m. only
 4. We must show this lost world that our Faith is not something we bring out only on Sunday mornings,
 - a. Dress up in special “go-to-meetin’” clothes, paint on a pious smile for an hour,
 - b. Mouth a few religious platitudes,
 - c. Then go back to being pagans again Sunday afternoon.

5. We must show them our faith is as good for Tuesday afternoons and Friday nights as it is for Sunday mornings.
6. And that we truly believe, **WHAT** we believe, **IN WHOM** we believe, determines *where* both we & **THEY** will spend eternity.

II. TEXT

A. V. 1

¹ After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go.

1. This takes place in the last months of Jesus' mission.
2. He's left the northern region of Galilee where He's spent the majority of His time, and has come south into Judea, the province where Jerusalem is located.
3. Jesus had appointed His 12 *official* disciples 3 years before.
4. But besides the 12, there was a large group of people who followed Jesus.
 - a. Many were "disciple-candidates;" young men who aspired to become His disciple & were waiting for Jesus to select them.
 - b. There were others who would come & go as personal matters required them to head home for a time to take care of business.
 - c. But once the business was finished, they would once again take-up following Jesus.
5. From this larger group of followers, He appointed 70 to go out in pairs to the villages & cities He would soon be visiting, to prepare the people by proclaiming the Kingdom of God and demonstrating its power.
6. It's interesting that Jesus first selected the 12, then this larger group of 70.
 - a. Those numbers are meaningful to the careful Bible student.
 - b. The Sons of Jacob & tribes of Israel were 12.
 - c. When Moses needed assistance in leading Israel during the journey to Canaan, he appointed 70 judges.
 - d. In Jesus' day, the nation of Israel carried on this tradition of the 70 judges in the Jewish *Sanhedrin*, their highest governing body.
7. In appointing the 12 & 70, Jesus was indicating that He was establishing a new system, a new spiritual nation; the Church.

8. As Jesus sent them out, we read in v. 2 . . .

B. V. 2

² Then He said to them, “The harvest truly *is* great, but the laborers *are* few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.”

1. As Jesus sent them out, He gave them a *vision* of a fantastic harvest.
2. Because our economy isn't based on agriculture, this isn't all that inspiring – but it was for them.
3. Their whole world revolved around the harvest.
 - a. Their entire calendar was aimed at those points during the year when all the labor of proceeding months would pay off in reaping the produce of their fields.
 - b. Harvest was a time of celebration & great joy because it was pay-day.
4. When Jesus said the harvest was great, they understood Him to mean that it was a *bumper crop* – that the fields were *filled* with ripe produce ready to be brought in.
5. But they understood He was speaking of a *spiritual harvest*; the harvest of souls for the Kingdom of God.
6. They knew He was saying that there were many in the places they would go who were ripe for salvation.
 - a. God had been working to prepare them for the disciple's mission.
 - b. He'd been softening them through circumstances,
 - c. Plowing up the fallow ground of their hearts through conviction of sin,
 - d. Removing the barrier of honest doubts,
 - e. Demonstrating His power & love in countless ways.
 - f. The Spirit had been convincing them of their need for God's mercy.
 - g. The “itch” for something more in life had grown.
 - 1) Have you ever had an itch in the middle of your back where you can't reach it?
 - 2) And no matter what you do, it doesn't go away.
 - 3) The only relief is to find someone with the right touch to get it.

7. That's what the Spirit of God does with the lost.
 - a. He gives them an itch in their soul that no matter what they do, it doesn't satisfy.
 - b. Oh, they try all kinds of things to scratch that itch, but nothing works.
 - c. Then God sends one of His sons or daughters along who's also had that itch, & knows right where & how to scratch.
 - d. The scratch for the itch of the human soul is the Good News of Jesus Christ
 8. And the Spirit had been at work preparing the people the disciples were about to go to -- Just as He continues to do today to the people we encounter.
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9. But there was a problem; while the harvest was great, the *harvesters* were few. This was a disaster in the making!
 - a. Again, while the meaning of this may be lost on us, it was ultra poignant for those who heard Him.
 - b. You see, when the time for harvest came, every available hand turned out to reap. Few were too old or too young to harvest.
 - c. Everything depended on gathering the produce at the right moment.
 - d. And the window of opportunity often lasted for just a couple days.
 - e. So when the harvest was ready, every possible person was employed in reaping.
 10. It was hard work too.
 - a. They'd go into the fields early in the morning & work until the light failed.
 - b. It was exhausting, back-breaking labor – but there was nothing else for it – it had to be done!
 11. What every farmer dreaded was that the time for harvest would come & he'd not be able to find enough workers.
 12. That's the danger Jesus presents here – the harvest of souls is potentially awesome, but there aren't enough workers.
 13. The disciples would hear this as a call for a sense of *urgency* in their mission.
 14. If not enough workers was a *tragedy* when it came to something as mundane as a barley harvest, how much more disastrous would a lack of *spiritual harvesters* be?
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15. There are some terrible tragedies taking place in the world today – things that break our hearts.
- a. 4,000 children are aborted every day in this nation; 1½ million a year.
 - b. Since January, 1973 when abortion on demand was made legal, nearly 54 million children's lives have been terminated; and that's just in *this* country.
 - c. Add to that the genocide & atrocities taking place in places like Bosnia, Soviet Georgia, Rwanda, & Sudan.
 - d. At this moment in Northern Uganda, the rebel LRA, led by madman Joseph Kony, is abducting dozens of children from their parents & homes.
 - 1) These innocent children are then brutalized & terrorized into such a state that they end up becoming murderous soldiers for the LRA.
 - 2) They are forced to march for miles, stopping every so often so that 1 or 2 can be shot to terrorize the survivors.
 - 3) When they arrive at the LRA headquarters, they're given a machete & told to butcher another child or they will be the one butchered.
 - 4) The LRA is made up of hundreds of children, 8 to 20 year olds who have become hollow-eyed *monsters*.
 - 5) Since the LRA makes it's recruitment raids at night, every afternoon, 10's of thousands of children travel many miles south to safer cities beyond Kony's reach.
 - 6) These cities have no facilities for these kids so they sleep in any hole they can find. Hundreds of bodies piled here and there.
 - 7) Then every morning they travel back to their homes, often to find that their parents have been murdered by LRA troops.
16. Does that shock you? Does it make you sad? It should. We're involved in helping these poor innocent children & will have more to share with you soon.
17. But as sad and tragic as what's happening in Northern Uganda is, the fate that awaits those who die without Christ is far, far worse.
18. *Hell* is a destiny so hideous, so awful, it brought Jesus to the Cross to save us from.

19. I know talking about hell isn't fashionable; in some circles, it's not *polite*.
 - a. Many churches today have made mentioning hell taboo.
 - b. It's no fun to talk about hell, it makes people uncomfortable.
 - c. But we cannot let that keep us from acknowledging its reality & it's threat!
 - d. Jesus didn't hesitate to speak of the existence of hell and urge His listeners to make sure they didn't end up there.
 - e. If it was important to Jesus, it ought to be important to us.
 20. Imagine a county road crew that refused to put up a "Bridge Out" sign on a picturesque country road because they didn't want to *scare* drivers or *ruin* the view.
 21. We'd call this gross negligence & hold them responsible & liable for those who drove on to their deaths.
 22. Well, millions of lost men & women are tooling down the road of life unmindful of the fact that up ahead the Bridge is out & they're headed for eternal disaster.
 23. It's our *duty* to warn them & to point out that *right now*, they can change the road they're on by putting their faith in Jesus Christ.
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24. Because there were few harvesters, Jesus told them to do 2 things –
 25. The first is found in the last half of v. 2 -
“ . . . therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.”
 - a. The first thing they must do is pray, & ask God to send more workers.
 - b. There are *plenty* of workers – but they're not engaged in the harvest.
 - c. So the faithful must ask God to move the workers into the field where they're needed.
 26. What Jesus means is made clear by taking a closer look at the words "Send out."
 - a. In Greek it means *strong compulsion*, even to the point of violence.
 - b. It's the word used to describe a demon being "cast out" of someone.
 27. Jesus is directing His followers to pray that God would *compel*

- His people to make the harvest of souls a *passionate priority*.
- a. It's not that God *forces* people to do the work of evangelism.
 - b. He doesn't twist arms or coerce & threaten us.
 - c. What He does is *give us a vision of the harvest* on one hand & *the danger of hell* on the other.
 - d. It's that inner vision that tunes our heart to beat in time with God's heart and makes us passionate about saving the lost.
28. We see this passion, this strong sense of compelling to win sinners to Jesus in a manlike John Knox who cried out to God, "Give me Scotland or I die!"
29. We see it in the Apostle Paul who said, "I wish that I would be accursed if it would lead to the salvation of my fellow Jews." [Romans 9:3]
30. We see it in the Moravians who sold themselves into slavery so they could share Christ with slaves locked away in slave camps.
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31. The first thing we must do is ask God to place a vision of the harvest so firmly in the hearts of His people, winning the lost becomes a passionate priority.
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32. The 2nd thing is found in v. 3 –

C. V. 3

3 Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves.

1. Jesus made them the answer to their own prayers by sending them into the harvest.
2. But notice how He told them to go – as lambs among wolves.
3. Not exactly an *appealing* picture, is it? Wolves love mutton, mutton is tasty.
4. Jesus is *not* saying that they'll be eaten alive as they go.
5. He's speaking of the mode & method they're to use as they win the lost.
6. The world is *wolfish*;
 - a. It's all about power & intimidation.
 - b. Wolves are fearsome creatures; hungry, greedy, always on the prowl for more.
 - c. They're treacherous & cruel, ready at any moment to use violence to get what they want.
 - d. So is the world.

7. Jesus tells His followers that as they go to reap the harvest of souls, they're not to operate in the world's mode of force & intimidation.
 8. They are to be like sheep, gentle & humble.
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9. This passage has been conveniently overlooked at several points in the history of the Church. The Crusades & Inquisition are notable examples.
 10. Even though Jesus said His Kingdom was not of this world, some of His followers don't seem to have gotten that memo, and they have tried to make it so.
 11. They're *militant sheep*, who use political, economic, and sometimes even military force to try to establish the Kingdom of God.
 12. They are "*Lambo*"; Commando Sheep.
 13. Jesus made it clear, the harvest of souls is reaped in a non-threatening, gentle, humble way.
 14. Our answer to the hostility & intimidation of a wolfish world is the quiet meekness of the flock of God.

D. V. 4

4 Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals; and greet no one along the road.

1. As Jesus sent them out on this trip, He told them to go light, taking no provision of luggage.
2. They would only be gone for a couple weeks and could look to the hospitality of those they went to, to provide for them.
3. He even told them to avoid unnecessary social pleasantries.
 - a. When He said, "**Greet no one along the road**" He wasn't telling them to be rude, just not to get caught up in ling-winded but empty social rituals.
 - b. It was the practice of some to give long, elaborate greeting rituals to those they met.
 - 1) There was a hug & polite kiss on each cheek.
 - 2) Then there was a flowery blessing in which you pronounced good will on the person, his family, his friends, his house, his good, his health; you name it, it got a blessing.
 - 3) Then they would engage in small talk that could go on for an hour or more.

- c. But there was no real point or purpose to these elaborate greetings because they were insincere; a feigned friendliness.
 4. Jesus told them to not get caught up in silly, time-wasting rituals like these, because the priority of the harvest was too great.
 5. Their whole focus was to be on one thing – the harvest of souls.
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6. Some time later, as Jesus was preparing to depart & turn His mission over to the disciples, He told them that whereas before they'd *not* taken any provisions, now they were to.
 7. This change came because their training as disciples was complete.
 - a. Their whole lives would now be the mission of saving men & women.
 - b. And while they would need to take thought for food & clothes & shelter, their *primary* task, their passionate priority was *still* the harvest.

III. CONCLUSION

A. 2005

1. Here we are, it's the year 2005.
2. It doesn't take a genius or Bible scholar to see that the events foretold in Scripture surrounding the Return of Christ are all in place.
3. Time is short and Jesus will be coming soon.
4. The harvest is more ripe today than at any time in history.
5. What Jesus said to those 1st disciples the Holy Spirit is saying to us as the later disciples.
6. The Harvest is great. There is a heaven to gain and a hell to be shunned.
7. There are a lot of *potential* laborers for the harvest today, but are they reaping?
8. Let's pray that we would get a vision for the Harvest and that God would set a passion within us to see the lost won to Christ.
9. Let's ask God to set a holy urgency in us to reach out.
10. Then – Let's Go! Let's share our faith with the people around us.