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This section of scripture this morning has within it both a philosophy of our purpose, and also un-avoidably a self reckoning. Both corporately and individually, if this is our purpose, we must be accountable. We are forced to compare ourselves, as we always are, to the standards set for us by scripture.

We are a people, by definition, who have identified with and submitted ourselves to the authority of what we believe and claim is a book written by God who created us. God owns everything. He created everything. He alone has authority over everything. The world is His, and all that is in it . . . is His.

If that is true, and it is, then He has the final say on what is right and what is wrong. What gives glory to Him, and what dis-honors Him. And His book is full from cover to cover with truth. Something is right. And something is wrong. Good and evil. Actions honorable and actions punishable. Moral right and moral wrong.

Our world is full of books. We're literally drowning in information. In my lifetime the the number of words in print and published whether in books or

on the internet has been an exponential explosion.

Daniel wrote what an angel told him at the very end of his book of prophecy these words; Dan 12:

3“And those who are wise will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. 4“But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase.”

The term *knowledge will increase* is pitted directly against the words at the beginning, *those who are wise*. In Daniel chapter 11: 33, 35. it says it this way;

And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days...

Those who are wise; those who understand . . . those terms are not the same as the knowledge that increases. This revelation given by God is able to give wisdom and understanding. Increased knowledge does not equate to wisdom.

We are living in the time the angel described. Knowledge has increased exponentially. If you graphed what is known from Abraham until Abraham Lincoln it would be a steady increase, rising, rising, slowly rising, and then if you graphed knowledge from Lincoln to the present it would look like a parabolic curve. A long even toe and then an energetic curve upwards and finally, like a rocket ship heading straight up into outer space.

But as the angel told Daniel, there is a difference between knowledge, and insight. Insight being wisdom from knowing revealed truth as opposed to human knowledge.

God revealed all of the wisdom we can have, once for all, in this complete revelation. Wisdom leads to life. Knowledge does not. Knowledge is rocketing to outer space. But it doesn't lead to life. The wisdom of this book leads to life and thriving.

As christians we have made a conscious decision to find the wisdom of this book. We are to mine it like gold. We are those who have made a commitment to understand all of this book and to weigh every moral action by the authority of the words of this book.

That, by definition, is who we are. But that isn't all of it. We aren't supposed to be hoarders of the wisdom. In fact the opposite is true. We are ordered by our Lord and King to go out into the highways and the bi-ways and exhaust ourselves giving the wisdom away. Calling others to leave the foolishness of knowledge behind, and come, enjoy wisdom.

And that's what we have this morning. Jesus, having filled His followers as full as full can be with the wisdom of God, is sending them forward to prepare the way ahead of Him.

At this juncture in His mission He has Seventy followers, besides the 12 apostles, who He is sending ahead of Him to announce that the King has arrived and He is calling people out of Satan's kingdoms of this world into the Kingdom of God, in which Jesus is the King. Forgiveness is available. Come out of the darkness and enjoy the brightness of the Glory of God.

There is a reason this passage immediately follows the three examples of excuses why His followers could not go and do the work of the King. One guy wasn't going to cut it because he loved comfort too much. Another guy can't go because his father is his king, not Jesus, and a third guy can't commit because of concerns about his family.

But against the backdrop of the ones who can't possibly go and do the King's wishes, we have 70 who have fully committed to go and do what the King asks of them.

Are we in this story? Do these same principles apply to us? We aren't apostles. But neither are these followers of Jesus. The Seventy aren't the apostles. They are the first group, the prototypes if you will, of what

christianity is supposed to look like.

They don't have excuses and reasons why they cannot submit themselves to the King of creation and go out to do His bidding. Jesus has weeded all those folks out of the group, and the ones who remain are ready to go and work for the pleasure of the King.

What is their mission? We see it described in two places. Last week in chapter 9 Vs. 60b we read that Jesus said; *but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God.*” and in our passage today we read, vs 9b *say to them; The kingdom of God has come near to you.*’

Proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God. What is that? Is that an obsolete message, somehow replaced by stuff that the apostle Paul wrote later? Are we supposed to walk around telling people that the kingdom of God is here? What does that mean.

It means the same thing today that it meant then. We're just so far removed from it that we have to lay some groundwork so people can understand our message. The Kingdom of God has everything to do with the good news of the gospel message today.

That message is this; You were born condemned. Born into a sinful rebellion against God, your creator and Lord. You were born at war with Him. Removed from His presence and His pleasure. And God must judge the rebellion. Individually and corporately, judgement is coming to this world.

It turns out that the reason we're born into a mess is because Satan tempted Eve and then Adam to rebel against God's clear commandment to them. And being the first humans, the entire human race inherited that fall and that rebellion. By default, Satan became the ruler of this world. Darkness and sin, murder and lies are his normal. The human race is under the rule of Satan. The kingdom, as it were, of Satan.

But the good news is that God has prepared a day of judgement in which He

will take back this world from Satan, judge all of the wicked and remove them, and set up His reign in this world, a world restored to righteousness. A glorious world.

What about the rebellors. We were born into this mess. Like we hear so often today, I didn't ask for this. Well, that's the good news of the kingdom. The King has died in your place and risen again to life from the dead, and He has graciously made a way for you to come out of the darkness, out of the control and rule of Satan, and into His kingdom. He will clothe you with His righteousness. You can come out from under the condemned world and into His ownership. Out of Satans' authority to reign, and into Jesus authority to reign.

That's the good news of the kingdom. That's the gospel message. Come out of Satan's condemned authority to reign, and come under Jesus authority to reign. Jesus died on a cross to make that opportunity available to everyone.

But, somebody has to tell them. Paul says to the Romans in chapter 10: 13 for *“WHOEVER WILL CALL UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.”* 14 *How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, “HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GLAD TIDINGS OF GOOD THINGS!”*

No one can be brought to safety without hearing the message about Jesus. Somebody has to go and tell. And Jesus assigns that responsibility to every believer that He brings into the kingdom. It's every Christians job to go tell everyone about Jesus.

These Seventy guys this morning are the prototype of the great commission. This is boot camp training for battle engagement.

I Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them two by two ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come.

Just a couple of things to note here. First the word "others" 70 others. Other than the 12 apostles. And also other than the non-committal guys that immediately precede this discussion.

If you've got excuses, God can find "others". Also note, the word appointed. *Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others,* The word translated appointed is different from the usual word that we translate appointed. It's the word we could also translate revealed. Showed.

It's used in Acts 1:24 when the Lord showed, by the casting of lots who would be the replacement apostle to take the place of Judas. In the case this morning of sending 70 men out as missionaries to prepare His way in every place, He reveals or shows who those 70 are. There is choosing and then revelation of who was chosen to go.

I Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them two by two ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come.

He chose the 70. He revealed by appointment who He had chosen. And then He sent them two by two. Groups of two would go to every place that Jesus was going to visit before His death. Why 2X2?

Eccl. 4:9,10 talks of the synergy of 2. *9 Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. 10 For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up.*

There is a synergistic relationship to two people giving effort. The result is greater than the sum of 2 individuals working apart. More accomplished work than what each could accomplish alone. A good return for their labor.

The other reason for two going together is that God instituted the rule that no proof can come from a single witness. In a courtroom situation it takes 2 or 3 witnesses to confirm truth. Deut. 19:15 says; *on the evidence of two or three*

witnesses a matter shall be confirmed.

Two get a better return. And two can offer support to each other. Also two are enough to establish the truth of a matter. So Jesus *sent them two by two ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come.*

This preaching tour, ahead of Jesus, is like a boot camp. We'll see in a few verses that they went and accomplished this task, and then returned. It wasn't a permanent assignment. Go to the towns and cities and announce the Kingdom of God; the authority to reign of God as opposed to Satan, has come, and the King is coming to your town for a visit. Get ready to receive the Messiah, the King.

2 And He was saying to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.

Normally, this verse is interpreted as the harvest being the chosen wheat that the Lord will gather into His barn. We used to sing "Bringing in the sheaves". The harvest of the good wheat.

But in light of what we will look at next week in vss. 10 - 16 this harvest isn't just about the wheat. It's about judgement. *"But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment, than for you.*

Harvest is universal. Every knee will bow to Jesus. Every human being who ever breathed will be part of God's harvest. Harvest is universal. Some to glory, dressed in white garments, spotless and clean, for those who embrace the King now, and repent. And for others, for the tares, the harvest is a time to be burned up in fire. Everlasting terror. A horrific harvest for the rebellious enemies of God.

2 And He was saying to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.

This world is the harvest. The whole world. Every tribe, every ethnic group, every nation. The whole earth belongs to Jesus, and every man, woman and child will be harvested either in glory or in judgement.

Every person needs to hear that message. *“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few;”* Wow. It's up to these seventy to begin the dissemination of the message, the Kingdom of God is at hand, it's in this world that is about to be judged. Repent of sin and embrace the authority of the Lord Jesus. Come out of the rebellion and join with the redeemed.

The task is daunting. Impossible. Spread the gospel to every person. The harvest is universal; every person *therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.*

Ask the Lord to send out more laborers. The task is daunting. We can't do it. We need more laborers. So Jesus says *therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.*

There's only one problem with that prayer. It's the laborers asking for more laborers. I can only speak for myself. How can I pray this prayer that Jesus told me to pray; if I'm not one of the laborers. It becomes a judgement on me, if I'm asking for more help, and I'm not even doing my part, my share of the work.

The whole idea of this request is to shine the light on those who are asking. Lord, we need more workers. Well, you might start by getting to work yourself before you ask me for more. Right. Don't ask me for more help when you're doing nothing.

This prayer has the effect of supplying at least one laborer. The one praying can't pray it and not go himself. Notice the beginning of the answer to the request in the first word of the next verse; Go!

3 *“Go your ways;”* The problem: The King is arriving. This world system

will be judged. Satan and his world full of his captives is about to be judged. The harvest is imminent. The message of redemption needs to be disseminated. To the whole earth. The solution; Go! 3 “*Go your ways;*

But Jesus is going to give them some instructions as He commissions them. Here is the commissioning; *behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.*

Lambs in the midst of wolves. Wolves have natural predatory instincts. Lambs not only do not have any, they likewise have no survival mechanisms. Lambs are like standing food. MRE's. Meals ready to eat.

Here's the picture. The world is ruled by Satan and the inhabitants of the world are spiritually dead, they are in the employ of their king, whether they realize it or not. They are natural enemies of the spiritually awakened who belong to the opposing King of kings.

So here are the odds. 70 against the whole world. And the world is a hostile place to those who do not belong to this world's king. 70 sheep, lambs even, tender and especially delectable to wolves. 70 lambs in a world of wolves.

I've often used the metaphor of a small group of enemy combatants in the middle of a war zone. In a hostile foreign land. Me and Pam like to watch Seal Team, where a little group of Navy Seals are parachuted into the middle of hostile territory. Christians massively outnumbered by the world of unbelievers we are in the midst of. Sheep in the midst of wolves works.

70 sheep in an entire world of salivating wolves is bad odds. For the sheep, those odds are as bad as it gets. Two by two. If all 70 were together, at least the ones in the middle would survive a few minutes longer, but they're sent out 2X2. 2 sheep walk into a pack of wolves, and tell the wolves judgement is coming if you don't become a sheep. Really bad odds.

Except for one thing. The Ruler of the universes owns the sheep. That changes the odds drastically. We may be tasty sheep, but the Creator of the

worlds, the Sovereign King of everything that **is**, owns us.

Paul says in Romans 8:36 *Just as it is written, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED."* But Jesus says in Luke 21:17 *And you will be hated by everyone because of My name. 18 Yet not even a hair of your head will perish.*

We are sheep sent to wolves, but the wolves can't touch us, unless the Master allows it. Jesus tells them, you're lambs, I'm sending you to wolves, and just to make it fair, for the wolves, take no provisions. That's right. Take nothing with you.

4 *"Carry no purse, no bag, no shoes; and greet no one on the way. Don't take anything to sustain yourselves. And don't stop along the way. Don't pick up any along the way to add to your numbers. Two sheep with one purpose. Go to the towns that I will visit later. When you get there, preach the Kingdom. Announce the King.*

That isn't a permanent requirement. The no purse, no bag no extra shoes thing. Later He will send them again and tell them to indeed take along these necessary items. But for His purposes at this time, leave everything that might help sustain you in your journey, at home.

In Luke 22:35, Jesus looking back on this effort asked them; *Then Jesus asked them, "When I sent you out without purse or bag or sandals, did you lack anything?" "Nothing," they answered.*

This group is the prototype. And part of the boot camp training for them is to learn that God can supply every provision. They may be lambs in the midst of wolves, but their heavenly Father sovereignly reigns over everything. They didn't get eaten. And they lacked nothing.

5 *"And whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house.'* 6 *"And if a man of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him; but if not, it will return*

to you.

God always has His remnant. In every place. Elijah thought he was all alone, the last living saint of God, about to be obliterated, and God informed him, no, I have 7000 men in Israel who have not bowed the knee to Baal.

Likewise, Paul after getting beat senseless several times received this word from the Lord; Acts 18; *9 And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent; 10 for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for **I have many people in this city.**" 11 And he settled there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.*

Jesus sends the 70, and part of His provision for them is this idea that there will be sympathetic households who will receive them and provide for their needs in this work they are doing for God. God has those people, in every place. God has a remnant that are His in every place.

5 "And whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house.' 6 "And if a man of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him; but if not, it will return to you.

Sheep in the midst of wolves. Take no provisions. Find a sympathetic Godly household. The peace of Christ will rest on the man of that house.

7 "And stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house.

God provides the house and the wages, food and drink and shelter. Laborers doing God's bidding are worthy of their hire. God doesn't let His soldiers go hungry.

But then a bit of wisdom. Do not keep moving from house to house. Be satisfied with God's provision for you. The food may be meager. But you need to stay at that first place.

When these guys walk into a town and heal the sick and do miracles, all of a sudden, better opportunities may come along. Your peace rested on a poor man with poor food, but now a rich guy with excellent food offers you a comfortable bed with great food.

There is a built in safety in this. We turn on our TV sets and it's easy to find the televangelists who fly into some place in their Lear Jets. False teachers. False teachers all have one thing in common. They climb the money ladder. They're in it for profit.

Guys come into town and are received by poor folk who belong to God in that place, one of their credentials that they're the real thing is that they aren't climbing the money ladder. Stay at the place God first provided. Eat and drink with those folks.

Jesus says, don't be like the false prophets and false teachers who are in this for the gain. *Do not keep moving from house to house.* I think that's still good advise today.

8 *“And whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat what is set before you; 9 and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’*

This is your instructions. If you enter a city, and they receive you, eat what is set before you. Accept God's provision for you thankfully. Again don't go looking for more. Better accommodations. Better food. Eat what is set before you.

heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ Heal the sick. These men have a radically new message to proclaim. It's a different message. Something totally new. What do they have to prove that their radical new message is indeed from God?

The go out with miracle powers. They not only can heal the sick, but we'll see

when they return they say, *Lord, even the demons were subject to us!* They can do miracles of healing and they have power over demons. That supports the radical message they bring;

and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' God's Messiah is coming. The Authority to Reign of God has come near to you. God's rule in this world, as opposed to Satan who is the ruler of this current world, has come close to you. It's knocking at the door. Redemption, out of this condemned world, and into God's world, is at hand. Get ready to receive that. The Messiah is coming.

10 "But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, 11 'Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you; yet be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near.'

All I want to do this morning is read these words. God's message comes with a heavy weight of responsibility to the hearers. Those who receive the message, repenting of this evil world, anxious for redemption and glory in God's world, will receive life.

Those who reject God's message and provision for redemption, will receive the judgement already pronounced for them. Heaven and hell hang in the balance with these messengers that God sends. The good news is that there's escape from judgement available. Leave this world behind and embrace the King of kings.

The bad news is, if you won't do that, only judgement remains.

In John Bunyan's classic parable, *Pilgrim's Progress*, the main character, Christian, is told that he is living in the City of Destruction and that he needs to flee from there. He tries to get his wife and family to flee with him and they won't leave the city where destruction is imminent. So ultimately, he flees the city, alone.

That's our message. This world is the city of destruction, and we have the message, the warning. You need to flee from this world that is slated for destruction. You are in peril. Destruction is imminent. Flee to safety. Flee to Jesus.

The good news is that you have been ransomed. Purchased out of the city of destruction. Safety is available. Forgiveness is available and free. Flee this place. Run to Jesus. That's our message for our families and our neighbors.

“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. 3 “Go your ways