Lord of the Harvest

Luk 10:1-16

Key verse 2 "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

The Lord of harvest is the giver of the harvest. The one from whom the harvest of salvation comes (Jas 1:18; 1Jn 4:4; Jonah 2:9; Eph 2:8) is he, the glorious ***κυρίου τοῦ θερισμοῦ***, the Lord of the harvest. To him alone we give all glory for the harvesting of our souls into the kingdom of Christ. Into what have we been harvested? The kingdom of God as mediated by Christ our king. Under his rule, we here are collectively, corporately, being built together to become a dwelling in which he lives by his Spirit (Eph 2:22; 1Co 12:27). And now, the Lord of harvest wants to work in us and among us and through us as the body of Christ for the harvesting of others.

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Jesus was now passing through Samaria on his way to Jerusalem (Luk 9:51-52). The turning point of Luke's Gospel took place in the previous chapter, when Jesus was publicly declared by Peter as, "**Τὸν Χριστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ**", God's Anointed (Luk 9:20). From this point forward, we are presented with the picture of Jesus as the King, God's Anointed, resolutely making his way to Jersualem and the cross (Luk 9:51). Stretching across the rest of the chapters of this gospel, there is a progressive build up toward the climax: Christ's entry into Jerusalem, where he was to gain the throne of David by way of his rejection and crucifixion, by way of his victory on the cross. The ***trajectory*** of today's passage is the cross. The climax, the focus, the centerpiece of this entire gospel is the cross (Luk 24:26-27). What is your focus? My daughter Ellie is doing her senior research project on the special significance in the NT of the term **μὴ γένοιτο** **meaning** far be it, may it never be. It is possible that the term **μὴ γένοιτο** is a speech act by which a person seriously and solemnly declares before God that a certain abhorrent thing should never happen. That said, I most solemnly declare **μὴ γένοιτο** far be it from us that we ever should shift focus away from what Christ has done on the cross to what we must do! **μὴ γένοιτο** far be it from us that we should ever fail to preach dependence on what Christ has done on the cross. **μὴ γένοιτο** far be it from us that we should ever boast ourselves, our gifts, -- that we should ever boast of anything except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is [δύναμις θεοῦ ἐστιν] the power of God." (1Co 1:18)

Verse 1 says, "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." Jesus was sending these disciples out ahead of him on a ***short-term*** mission to all the places where he was soon to go. Samaria covered an area of 1500 square miles (triple the size of the LA County). Hundreds of thousands of people in the first century lived there. And we know from archaeology that Samaria at that time was dotted with many towns. So, to reach all these places, Jesus sent out these other disciples in twos. There were 36 duos of them who were to be sent out to serve in 36 separate places. Verse 16 indicates that they were his spokes persons. He told them, "He who listens to you listens to me". By the anointing of his Spirit on them, they were the mouthpieces through whom he would speak to the people at their destinations. They were the extensions of himself -- they were the proxies through whom the king was to extend his dominion. He sent them out in twos for mutual support. But he also sent them out in twos for the confirmation of their proclamation concerning him. This was in accordance with Deu 19:15 which says, "A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses." The third witness would be Spirit through whom they spoke (1Jn 5:9; Acts 6:10; Jn 15:26). And, to further confirm their message, Jesus gave them divine power to heal (v. 9) and power over demonic forces (vv. 19, 17).

Jesus began to give instructions to these 72 disciples he appointed. He told them in verse 2, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few." There were so many people in Samaria ready to be harvested. This reminds us of the great harvest that happened in this same region, in Sychar, in John chapter 4. This event happened about a year and a half before**.** On that occasion, the people of Sychar heard the woman's testimony about Jesus, and came out of the town and made their way toward him. As they were crossing the fields, Jesus told his disciples, "open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe [λευκαι white] for harvest" (Jn 4:35).

Are the fields always ripe for harvest? Is the harvest always plentiful? No. On this same occasion, while instructing the 72, Jesus turned and looked to the north, toward the cities of northern Galilee and declared DOOM on them. He said in verse 13, "Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida!" Then, in verse 15, he declared, "And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths." Bill Johnson, pastor of Bethel Church in Redding, likes to regularly say "*God is in a good mood*". Can you picture Jesus at this moment with a broad smile on his face, with joy in his heart, saying, "And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths."? Why did Jesus say this? According to verse 13, it's because they did not repent (cf. Mat 11:20). Jesus preached and even performed miracles in these three cities, but instead of a plentiful harvest, there was plentiful rejection. They were not ripe for harvest but ripe for judgment (cf. 1Pe 2:8; Jn 2:23-24; 6:66; Ro 10:21; 11:7-8; Acts 13:46; 19:9).

We see such a sharp difference between Samaria and these Galilean cities; we see a great difference between the soils of the hearts of people in these two locations. What made that difference? Grace. The grace of the Lord of the harvest. UBF creed Article 8 based on Eph 2:8 and 5 says, "We believe that we are ***made*** righteous by grace ***alone***, through faith alone". By grace alone, the soils of the hearts of men are prepared by the Lord of harvest, by his Spirit, to receive the gospel message with saving faith. Does not the term itself, "Lord of the Harvest", suggest that ***he*** is the one who produces the harvest?

Again, verse 2 says, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few." On this unique occasion, the Lord of the harvest made Samaria to be a field abundantly ripe for harvest. Consequently, there was an urgent problem: Soooo plentiful was the harvest that 72 workers weren't enough. Jesus, therefore, told them to pray: "Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out **[ἐκβάλῃ]** workers into his harvest field." The prayer was ***not*** for workers to be "sent out" but for them to be literally **ἐκβάλῃ** thrust out into the harvest. Samaria was, metaphorically, like a field of ripened grain that would soon to fall to the ground and spoil. The people were in desperate need. So the prayer was for workers to be **ἐκβάλῃ** rushed out like paramedics into the fields. What stirred in Jesus' heart when he asked them to pray like this? Compassion. Compassion for people suffering in sin. This is suggested to us by Mat 9:36 which describes how Jesus felt when he sent the Twelve out into Galilee in the previous chapter (Luk 9:1-6). It says, "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."

Some period of time went by while the 72 disciples prayed. Then, in verse 3, Jesus commanded them to go out on their short-term mission journey. He commanded them, "Go!" (**υπαγετε**!) He said this with compassion for the harassed and helpless, sheep of Samaria. His command, "Go!" was urgent. They were told to hurry, to "not greet anyone on the road" (verse 4b), and to not be distracted by concern to provide for themselves (v4a; 7). This was a rescue mission.

Jesus warned the 72, "I am sending you out like lambs among wolves." Our country is becoming more and more anti-Christian. In April last year, the NYTimes reported that the new t-shirts say, ''***So Many Right-Wing Christians . . . So Few Lions.***'' Six months ago, a new book came out entitled, "***So Many Christians, So Few Lions***" and this book surveys the growing anti-Christian sentiments in America. Our land is becoming more and more like that *towebah* (תּוֹעֵבַה) disgusting (Eze 16:50) place mentioned in verse 12, is becoming more and more like Sodom, ripe for judgment. Nevertheless, the Lord of the harvest has chosen by grace (Ro 11:4-5) for a few precious souls even on our Sodom-like campuses to be made ripe for harvest. Christ's love, therefore, compels us to ask the Lord of harvest for rescue workers to be **ἐκβάλῃ** rushed out like paramedics into the fields to seek and find these souls for whom the Lamb was slain. How beautiful are the feet of those who reach them with the gospel (Isa 52:7; Ro 10:14-15)!

Today there are many foreign mission fields where "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few". Our Lord Jesus, therefore, is seeking workers. And he commands in verse 3, "Go!" But is this a command we must each obey? Let's think about this. Elsewhere Jesus commands, "...***go***, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven." (Mat 19:21) "***Go*** to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there..." (Mat 21:2). "...***go*** to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin." (Mat 17:27) These commands obviously apply only to the persons to whom Jesus was speaking at that moment. So, when Jesus gives a command to go and do something, we shouldn't just assume that it applies to us. And this holds true with regards to Jesus' command, "go and make disciples of all nations", a command which appears in various forms at the end of each of the four gospels (Mat 28:19-20, Mk 16:15-16, Luk 24:47-49, Jn 20:21; cf. Acts 1:8). By this command, Jesus was unmistakably telling the Eleven disciples to go out as foreign missionaries to other nations. Make no mistake: Doing local area evangelism is NOT obedience to Jesus' world mission command. Hudson Taylor in 1865 emphatically declared, "*If you cannot in the sight of God say you are sure that you have a special call to stay at home, why are you* ***disobeying*** *the Savior's plain command to go?*" The Apostles, however, never said anything like that to us in the general epistles. And this is quite surprising. Jesus commanded them to teach others to obey ***everything*** he commanded them. He said, in the second half of the Great Commission in Mat 28:20, "and teaching them to obey ***everything*** [πάντα ***ALL***] I have commanded you." Where, then, do the Apostles teach us what they were commanded to do, to go out as foreign missionaries, make disciples, perform baptisms, and teach obedience? Specifically, where do they teach that in the general epistles? (I'm not talking about Titus and 1st and 2nd Timothy, the pastoral epistles, but the general epistles.) Is the command taught in 1Pe 3:15? "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you [etcetera]". No, this does not say for us to "go" anywhere and make disciples but to be ready with an answer. The same is true regarding Col 4:5-6, "Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. 6 Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know **how to answer everyone**.". There's no trace of the Great Commission being taught here.

How about Ro 1:5? Paul says in Ro 1:5 "we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles..." (NIV2011). When he says "***we***", who is he talking about? This was introductory part of the epistle. Paul had never met the Christians in Rome (v.10). So here, he was introducing himself to them, assuring them of his apostolic credentials. Therefore, by saying "***we*** received grace and apostleship", he is assuring them that he had received apostleship, the same apostleship that the other Apostles had received. He's not saying that "***we***" (meaning, all Christians) have received "apostleship to call all the Gentiles" because, notice, the very next verse says, "And ***you*** also are among those Gentiles who are called..." (NIV2011). Apostleship is not something ***we*** received because, in the NT, the term apostleship (ἀποστολ**ή**) refers strictly to the ἀπόστολ**οι** the apostles, the office that they ***alone*** possess. Paul asks in 1Co 12:29 μὴ πάντες ἀπόστολοι? Are all apostles? μὴ which equals "No" is the answer he expects to this question.

So, where is the Great Commission to be found in the general epistles? It is ***nowhere*** to be found in there. Amazingly, there not even a command in there to go out and do local area evangelism! Why is this so? It's because, in Christ, each of us form one body having different functions, not the same function.

Returning to verse 3 of today's passage, Jesus commanded the 72, "Go!" just as he commanded the Eleven "Go" in the Great Commission (Mat 28:19). To whom does the command "Go!" apply today? I wish to emphasize that the command does, indeed, apply to each one of us -- NOT as individuals, but as the body of Christ. We have been harvested into the kingdom of our Risen Lord Christ and are now members of the body of Christ; we are members of his local church body, the realm where his reign is visibly manifest. And he wants to use us as his body to advance his kingdom and harvest others into his kingdom, just as the 72 were called to do in this passage. Twice in today's passage, in verses 9 and 11, the 72 were instructed to proclaim the kingdom of God. That kingdom had already arrived in an inaugural sense when Jesus was anointed as King at his baptism with the Holy Spirit. And now Jesus was resolutely heading for Jerusalem to the cross where he aimed to purchase that kingdom with his own blood.

This Downey church is a local body of Christ. Together we form a church, ***not*** a ministry. Msn Isaac Kim, our former pastor, emphasized 1Co 12:12, saying that we here are united as one body. But, as a united local church body, our unity is NOT in uniformity such that we all have the same function. The Bible (*which is the final authority among us according to Article 3 of our creed*) repeatedly says that we each have a ***different*** function in the body (1Co 12:4-30; Ro 12:4-8; Eph 4:11-12; 1Pe 4:10, etcetera). A ministry is not a church and a church is not a ministry. Instead, each church is like a body and each church ministry is like a leg or an arm or a mouth belonging to that body. Hence, together, we don't form a campus ministry. Rather, we form a local church body that supports a campus ministry. The Antioch church featured in Acts 11:20-23 and Acts 13:1-3 is an excellent model of a local church that supported world mission. We all pray for the Lord of harvest to set apart for himself workers and send them out and, as a church, we establish programs to heavily encourage everybody to be campus bible teacher. But this should not be cookie cutter church, creating disciples who have identical roles. We use the title "shepherd" alot to encourage each other. But when Jesus repeated, "Feed my sheep" in Jn 21:15-17, he was talking only to Peter, who had denied him three times, reinstating him as the pastor of his sheep. Does "Feed my sheep" mean that we should ***each*** be heavily encouraged to be sheep-feeding bible teachers? Peter himself tells us what "Feed my sheep" means. Using the same verb (ποιμαίνω *poimaino*) that Jesus used in Jn 21:16, the Apostle Peter tells us in 1Pe 5:1-2, "To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder... Be shepherds [ποιμαίνω *poimaino*] of God's flock that is under your care". Are each of us called to be Bible teachers? Paul asks in 1Co 12:29 μὴ πάντες διδάσκαλοι? Are all teachers? μὴ which equals "No" is the answer he expects to this question. Jas 3:1 reads, "Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly."

Jesus finished his instructions to the 72 with these solemn words in verse 16: "He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me." The message that the 72 were to proclaim was simple: "The Kingdom of God is near" (vv. 9, 11). They had next to zero preparation for their mission. They were not as close to Jesus as the Twelve were and maybe didn't know as much about his teachings. Nevertheless, the next passage shows that their mission was a great success and that many in Samaria listened to them. This wouldn't have happened in Capernaum, Korazin or Bethsaida. The Lord of harvest made the Samaritans ripe for harvest. And that's why they listened to the 72. Success in harvesting is NOT to the glory of man. To be a success as a harvest worker, all you need to know is maybe 3% of the Bible, the ABC's. You don't need much preparation. And that is why we need to be very careful. If we happen to see an admirable, fruitful-looking harvester, that does NOT necessarily indicate that he has got his theology straight and that you would want to learn the bible from him!

Verse 16 again says, "He who listens to you listens to me". We need to listen carefully to what Jesus **actually says** in the Bible, and to ***not* what everybody believes about what he says.** One prominent pastor, Dr. John MacArthur, often asks, "***Why does He leave us here? ...Because there's one thing you'll never do in heaven and that's evangelize lost people. The primary task of the church then is that, that's why we're here.***" He is clearly incorrect. The thing of greatest importance that we will never do in heaven is stated in 1Jn 3:16. Please listen now to what this verse says, especially members of the newly formed board of overseers: "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers." This is talking here about our brothers ***inside*** the church body. It's saying that we each have a duty to deny ourselves and take up our cross to self-sacrificially love and lay down our lives for the ones ***inside*** the church. This is the greatest "***thing you'll never do in heaven***". This is the true "cross of mission" we each have. This is not open to debate. None of us here can say, **"Oh, that's not my calling, not my gifting. I'm a harvest worker"**. Conflicts happen and the church starts to malfunction when we selectively listen to Christ our King, doing outreach ministry at the expense of inreach ministry, when we raise disciples who deprioritize and neglect the duty in 1Jn 3:16. **We operate maximally as a body when we listen to our king, when we honor his word,** when we depend on his accomplishment on the cross, when we self-sacrificially love and build each other up, when we fan into flame the unique gifts of the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:10), when the preachers among us reject serving hobby horse evangelism expository messages but rather feed's God's flock with the glorious, empowering manna from heaven, the flesh and blood sacrifice of the Lamb (Jn 6:33, 55). By doing such things, the Lord of the harvest will then be all the more pleased with prayers. And we will become stronger as a body to **ἐκβάλῃ** rush out harvest workers and bring in a harvest.

One word: Ask the Lord of harvest.

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