

In the name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior, Amen.

10 After this, the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them out 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. So ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field. **3** Go your way. Look, I am sending you out as lambs among wolves. **4** Do not carry a money bag or traveler’s bag or sandals. Do not greet anyone along the way. **5** Whenever you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace be to this house.’ **6** And if a peaceful person is there, your peace will rest on him, but if not, it will return to you. **7** Remain in that same house, eating and drinking what they give you, because the worker is worthy of his pay. Do not keep moving from house to house. **8** Whenever you enter a town and they welcome you, eat what is set before you. **9** Heal the sick who are in the town and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near you.’

10 “But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, **11** ‘Even the dust from your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this: The kingdom of God has come near.’ **12** I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom on that day than for that town.

16 Whoever listens to you listens to me. Whoever rejects you rejects me. And whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me.”

17 The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name!”

18 He told them, “I was watching Satan fall like lightning from heaven. **19** Look, I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy. And nothing will ever harm you. **20** Nevertheless, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names have been written in heaven.” **This is God’s Word.**

Dear Friends,

Last week we heard about Jonah and how God had commanded him to go to the people of Nineveh with his Word. But when God told Jonah to go, he ran in the opposite direction. He didn’t want to go. Today, we have a sermon text that talks about Jesus sending 72 people out to share the gospel message. Their reaction was quite different from Jonah’s – they went willingly and were somewhat eager. As we consider the portion of scripture before us today, **“What do I do when the Lord says to me, “Go?””** Go and make disciples, go and share the gospel, go and be my witnesses.

I would guess that as we think about those questions, we might be more like Jonah – wanting to head in the other direction. We know we should be more willing to share the gospel but that seems like a frightening thing to do. Today, let’s take a closer look at what Jesus was saying in this section and how it can apply to us.

I. Jesus told these 72 he is sending out, **“The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. So ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field.”** Things haven’t changed over time. There are so many people that don’t know who Jesus is or what he has done and they need to hear the good news that Jesus has done everything necessary to save us. If we leave it up to one person – the pastor – he can only do so much. But if more join in the work, then the Word can reach many more people.

And yet, as Jesus sent them out, he told them, **“Look, I am sending you out as lambs among wolves.”** That isn’t exactly encouraging because sheep among wolves usually get eaten.

But remember, it is Jesus, the Good Shepherd, who is sending them out and so he will protect them as they go out. This is also a reminder that the world does not embrace Christianity and is an enemy to it, so we will meet some opposition, but as we share the Word, surprisingly, some of those wolves will become sheep.

And so Jesus, **“sent them out two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.”** They were to go in pairs to encourage one another and to prepare the people for his visit.

Let’s stop for a minute and think about how to apply this. If we are going out to knock on doors of people we have never met – what we might call “cold calls” – we should go in pairs to encourage one another and for safety sake. But what if we aren’t able to go knock on doors – for whatever reason – how do we carry out this command to “Go?” The command “Go” is to take action. What are some of the actions we can take as evangelists for Christ?

Maybe your action is to encourage young people in our congregation to think about public ministry. Maybe it is to support our synod schools who are training young people to be future pastors and teachers. Next week the voters will be meeting. Would this be a good time to send a special gift to MLC to help support a student studying for the public ministry?

Maybe your way to act might be to share Jesus with a friend who is suffering or in need. Talk about how your faith has helped you through difficult times. Invite them to come to church with you and even offer to pick them up.

Maybe your way to act is to help with the “Free” garage sale in September – to talk to the folks who come, to show Christian love to them and invite them to worship the following day. Maybe your way to act is to be part of our ministry that live streams the church service so others can watch it. Maybe you have friends that might not want to come to church but you can point them to our live streaming so they can hear about Jesus and how he has paid for our sins and brings us forgiveness through faith.

Maybe your way to act is to wear your Beautiful Savior T-shirt so that people might ask you about our church and give you an opportunity to invite them to worship. Maybe your way to act is to support our ministry with your prayers and your offerings and words of encouragement. There are many ways to reach out with the love of our Savior – in your prayers, ask the Lord of the Harvest to show you how he might be able to use you and ask him to help you to resist the temptation to do nothing.

II. And as we look for ways to act trust that God will give you the words or the tools that you need. In our Old Testament lesson God gave the widow of Zarephath the flour and oil she needed to support Elijah in his ministry. As Jesus sent out the 72 he told them, **“Do not carry a money bag or traveler’s bag or sandals. Do not greet anyone along the way.”** In other words, the people along the way will provide for you. Just stay focused on your mission to share the

gospel. That's why he told them, **“Whenever you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace be to this house.’”** While this was a common greeting, they were also announcing the peace that comes through the gospel – peace between God and mankind. That's what Jesus was all about. God demands perfection and Jesus was perfect in our place because we all have fallen short of what God demands. We know that we deserve God's wrath but we have his love and grace instead because of Jesus, who stepped in to take our punishment – he bore God's wrath for us. Now we have peace because of what Jesus did for us and that is a peace that is worth sharing.

Not everyone will embrace that peace but if people reject the message remember, they are not rejecting you but rejecting God who sent you and there are plenty of people to reach out to with this peace but above all, **“Rejoice that your names have been written in heaven.”** That doesn't mean we are any better than the folks that we are reaching out to but that we are forgiven and saved by our Savior's love and that is our motivation to share the good news.

What do you do when God says “Go?” Maybe you are already at work sharing the gospel or supporting the ministry we have or encouraging and supporting those training to be pastors and teachers. If not, ask the Lord to give you opportunities and be creative as you look for ways to talk about your Savior and invite others to come and hear the good news about Jesus. Amen.