

Personal Evangelism in Biblical Perspective: iShare–We Send

Luke 10:1-12

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March 4, 2012 – Morning Sermon

This is the word of God. It's the truth. Luke 10:1-12 says

[1] After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go. [2] And he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. [3] Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. [4] Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road. [5] Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house!' [6] And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. [7] And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house. [8] Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. [9] Heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' [10] But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, [11] 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near.' [12] I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.

The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

I have thoroughly enjoyed this Mission's Conference this year. I want to thank all of those involved. One of our great desires is not only to be blessed by you, missionaries, but that we might be a blessing and encouragement to you, even though I know you've had a pretty busy schedule. We come here by faith promising that we'll be committed to prayer and world evangelism personally, prayerfully and financially with our faith promise giving, going and praying. One of the reasons I love the Mission's Conference is because I grew up in a church where pretty much the whole denomination was built around missions. It was no wonder they called themselves Christian Missionary Alliance church. I grew up in

the First Alliance Church in Charlotte. We had about four to six mission conferences a year instead of just one. Now we usually had one big one where we all made our faith promise commitment.

I think the faith promise commitments originated out of the Christian Missionary Alliance ministry under the leadership of Dr. A.B. Simpson. Even though I was an unbeliever at that time I used to love that time of year, every year. Now that I'm a believer and a pastor I just rejoice in this week where I get the opportunity to challenge you and be challenged myself about how we can spread the Gospel of our Savior around the world. In other words, we get to fulfill our mission's statement that says *For God's glory Briarwood is committed to equipping Christians to worship God and reach Birmingham* which is our mission field and then *to reach the world* which is to our Judea, Samaria and to the utter most parts of the world. That is what God has called us to do. We not only can go here but we can go there by sending those whom God has called there and being partners with them, upholding them in prayer, financially and personally as to how the Lord would use us in that endeavor.

My pastor's name back then was H. P. Williams. HP would lead that service and this is the way we would do our faith promise commitments back then. We all had a card and all were told to bring the card to the front. HP Williams would be at the front and during the morning worship service, sitting at a table was the treasurer of the mission's committee. There was this gigantic adding machine sitting on the table with this big roll of paper behind it. People would bring up their card, hand it to HP and he would call out the amount. It was not exactly seeker friendly. The treasurer would key the amount in and I can still see the arm of that adding machine being pushed down each time an amount was entered. A little later HP would come over to the treasurer and say "What's the total brother?" The treasurer would read the total and HP would say "That's not enough hand the cards back out again." We would wait until the number got to what HP figured it ought to be that year.

We're going to let the Lord determine the number of our faith promise commitments but I do pray that God gives us the unity of our mission. I love unity in a church and I think unity in a church is first built around its mission - *For God's glory Briarwood is committed to equipping Christians to worship God and reach Birmingham to reach the world for Christ*. Our unity is found not only because we have the same mission but we have the same Savior. We have the same Word of God that leads us, the same Holy Spirit who empowers us and we have the same call of the Lord to fulfill the Great Commission until Jesus Christ comes again and by the Holy Spirit He'll be with us always even to the end of the age.

Another thing I think of with unity is unanimity in the mission. However the Lord is leading you but we all take hold of. I don't know how the Lord will lead you in your faith promise or in your prayer life or world evangelism but that's what I love about how the Lord lays the burdens on people and leads them in different ways,

but I long as a pastor that we are one hundred percent with unanimity committed to the Great Commission as we live out the great commandment to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, and mind, because the love of Christ has set us free. We long for that.

Last month the mission's committee came to me and said "Our theme is come and join the reapers" and immediately I began to know I had the challenge and opportunity to set the stage for the mission's conference which I preached two weeks ago and then to conclude the conference to bring in a speaker throughout the mission's conference. So I immediately went to all the passages of Scripture on 'come and join the reapers.' I found that the concept was uttered by our Lord three times in the Gospel and it's built around the phrase 'the harvest is plentiful but the reapers are few so pray to the Lord of the harvest to send forth reapers.' Jesus said that three times.

One of those times we looked at two weeks ago when we looked at the woman at the well. Jesus had an iShare moment when He shared the Gospel with the woman at the well. As she was brought to a saving relationship with the Living God who told her of her sin and realized this was the Messiah, then she turned around, went back to the city and told those in the city "come and see the Man who told me I was a sinner, is this not the Messiah, come out and see Him." While she was in the city the disciples came back having observed Jesus' iShare moment with the woman and not sure quite how to talk to Him about it so they didn't really ask much but they did begin to talk to Him some about the food He had to eat. They didn't realize the food He had, had to eat for it was the food of living out the purpose the Father had sent Him to and that is to seek and to save the lost. That is what nourished them.

Then He said to them "Look, the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few." Why does He know it's plentiful? It is because He is the Sower of the harvest and He's the Seed of the harvest. The Seed died and fell into the ground. It was the atoning death and burial of Jesus Christ. Then it was raised and He is the first fruits of the assured harvest of all of His people from all the corners of the earth who will be saved by the grace of God and "I will lose not one." The harvest is plentiful because the Sower Himself is the Seed who died the atoning death, was buried, raised and was the first fruits. What do we need? We need reapers. We need laborers to go into the harvest.

Can you imagine that moment? I know I'm speculating a little bit and I always want to be sure and say that but I can almost see Jesus standing there in the area of Samaria as He says "Look the fields are white unto harvest." My guess is He probably raised both hands and I'm sure one hand would have been pointed to the field because sometime around that time it would have been harvest time and they would have seen the fields being white unto harvest. You just need the reapers because see it's white unto harvest but the other hand was probably pointing back to the village of Sychar because while He is talking the white robed

Sycharians are coming out to Him. See, the fields are white unto harvest. They come and believe and then more believe. Now revival comes to that city.

Jesus also uttered this phrase, "The harvest is plentiful" not long before this passage in Luke 10. That is when He took the twelve disciples and He told them basically what He just told the 72 to do in Luke 10. He told them to go but He circumscribed where they were going. He told them to go but only go to the house of Israel. They were to only go through out Jerusalem and Judea but not to Samaria. They go out and come back amazed at what happened and Jesus says "The harvest is plentiful, the laborers are few so pray for the Lord to send out reapers."

Now He is at the conclusion of His ministry. In Luke 10:1 it starts out "After this..." He has just finished His Galilean ministry. Now the Bible says He sets His face to go to Jerusalem where He will be killed by the Scribes and Pharisees, buried and raised up on the third day. Before He goes to Jerusalem He will go down the River Jordan to the Valley. He will go through what is called the Galilee of the Gentiles and Samaria. Now this same Jesus who sent the twelve to Israel to the Jew is now about to send the 72 to Judea and Samaria and to touch the world. So we are at an interesting text that prefigures the Great Commission.

In fact, you can see the life of Jesus. What does Jesus do? He goes to His people. He then goes into Samaria, then Tyre and Sidon and you begin to see the touch of what happens when the Gospel goes to the world. Not only has Jesus gone to the Jew first and then to the Gentile, as we begin to see the Great Commission unfolding in His three year ministry but we also see what happens when He sends the twelve to the Jew first. Now, we see the 72 who go to Samaria and the Galilee of the Gentiles and the anticipation of the world.

There is something that is very clearly being done here. Why does He pick 72? It is harkening back to Genesis 10 where you have the table of the nations. There are 70 nations that represent the world. Clearly He is setting the stage for the Great Commission and what we see unfolding in the book of Acts as the Gospel goes to Jerusalem in Acts 1 through 8, to Judea and Samaria in Acts 9 through 12 and the utter most part of the world in Acts 13 through 28. And it's still going on today as the world gets turned upside down with the power of the Gospel. So that is the moment that we're looking at. It is a Great Commission prefigured moment in which we see the Good News that goes out, overwhelming opportunities and stunning implications.

Let's look at this sending moment of the 72. There are some things I'd like us to learn from it. After this He sends them out ahead of Him. The word that is used for send out is a verb made from a noun. The noun we transliterate into our language as apostle. It is turned into a verb which is apostello. The apostles are the 'sent ones' and He is the Sender. He is now sending them out apostello, as ambassadors of the Kingdom. It's not simply that every one of us are 'sent ones'

but He is sending them out on a cross cultural mission endeavor. They will leave those whom they have been raised with, go ahead of Christ to the Galilee of the Gentiles and Samaria and go through the towns to prepare the way for Christ as He is on His way to Jerusalem. That is what He is now sending them out to do.

Then He gives them some very specific instructions. First of all He gives them the proper perspective. The harvest is plentiful and the laborers are few. He equips them. Pray for the Lord to send out reapers. Secondly He tells them to go. Thirdly, He tells them to basically travel light. He doesn't want them to bring extra sandals, knapsacks, no money bag and no second coat. He doesn't want them to stop and greet. He is not saying to be discourteous because later on He'll tell them when they get to a house to greet them. He is talking about a habit of greeting there. They have a habit of greeting that is different than ours. We say "Hey how you doin?" "Fine." "See you later." That is not Middle East greetings. "Hey how are you doing?" "Let's sit down and talk about it." You then sit down for three to five hours. Jesus says here that the task is urgent so that custom of greeting one another is not the time. Treat each other courteously and with respect but get on the mission. Move forward immediately. So He puts them out into the mission immediately and He doesn't want them to stop.

I want to try and illustrate this. My mother's father would always pick me up on Saturdays and we would go to fill up the car with gas. You used to fill up the car once a week with a dollar's worth of gas. That's when someone would also pump the gas for you into your tank. We would go to the service station when I was just a boy. The man would come out and say "How much gas do you need?" My grandfather would say "Give me a dollar's worth, cap'in." I think it was short for captain but that's what he would call everyone. By the time that dollar's worth of gas was pumped my grandfather would have started a conversation and somehow we'd be related to that man filling up our gas. The next thing is we'd be going into the service station once that conversation arose and that meant a moon pie and an RC Cola was just around the corner for me. We'd go in and sit down and talk for a while. It wasn't this hurry, hurry, hurry or I'll text you.

Jesus said that on this mission that wasn't what they were doing. Treat people respectfully but don't get into these long conversations. This is an urgent mission and I want you to go by faith. Don't take a lot of extra stuff with you. You go by faith for I'm sending you into the harvest. I've not only provided the harvest and you but I'm going to provide for you out of the harvest because as you go into the harvest and see the harvest come they will offer you something to eat and a place to stay. So you won't need to carry the money bags for I'm your money bag. I will provide for you. Lord, how will You provide for me? It will be through the harvest. You receive what I will provide through the harvest. That is what you're supposed to do. So they go urgently. They are being prepared. They are given instructions.

They are also told that they are going to get two responses. They will get reception and rejection. When people are receiving you then you know that I've already been there in front of you. I'm coming behind you but I've already been in front of you. Do you know why? It is because something has already changed in that house. They are a son of peace. The work of peace is already at work and they are ready. I've already toiled up the harvest of those that are in that house. You'll see it and be able to discern it.

Isn't that what missions is all about? We're going to go and then we'll go where the Lord leads us. When we get there we ask "Lord, what are You doing because I want to second the motion? Where You are opening doors I want to walk through them. Where I have reception I want to take advantage of it." There is not only life unto life but there is also death unto death. There will be some that reject you. Don't get mad at them but be very clear. Move on.

There is one more piece of preparation for this mission I have you on. It has eternal significance. You are taking a message that delivers people from the judgment. If they receive you then peace will come. If they don't, it will be more tolerable for Sodom in the Day of Judgment, than for those who have rejected the King who came near with the Kingdom through His missionaries. So that is what He sends them to do and that's how He equips them. So the 70 go out and they have this marvelous ministry. We won't take time to see what happens when they come back but I do want to leave you with a couple of thoughts.

I want to give you five takeaways from this prefiguring of a Great Commission ministry of taking the Gospel to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the utter most parts of the world. The first takeaway is to fulfill our Great Commission mandate until Christ returns we are committed to going. We don't wait for people to come to us. I know you may be thinking that someone actually came to you and you didn't go to them. If you ever have that wonderful moment where a fish just shows up with a hook in the mouth and all I have to do is pull them to Jesus then I want you to know that somebody went to them first because there is none who seek, no not one. They have to be sought. We have to go. We go weeping. There is urgency. This is heaven and hell we are talking about. This is the glory of God or the emptiness of idolatry. This is life and death that we're talking about.

I'm not talking about whether our church has a good reputation or not because it does evangelism. I'm not talking about if we're actually adding numbers. I'm talking about people on the edge of eternity and the glory of God in the salvation of sinners, turning those who are dominated by sin into lovers of Christ and now they become assassins of sin with their very life. That's what we're talking about. So we're going. It's urgent and important. If you don't know Jesus I want you to come to Christ because you are a mission field but if you have come to Christ you're no longer a mission field, you're now a missionary. You have a mission field. It's your family, your neighborhood, your office, your friends, your teammates, your classmates. There's your field. You are the missionary. Go.

All of us go but not all of us are called or sent to do cross cultural missions. We are all called to be missionaries but not all of us go abroad. Here Jesus sent the twelve to the house of Israel. He has the 72 and not only do they go where they were raised but I'm calling you, equipping you and preparing you to go cross cultural to the Gentiles of the Galilee and Samaria. I'm sending you ahead to the places I'm going to go through. I'm sending you beyond where you are contextually comfortable. I'm sending you into another situation. We are all called to be missionaries, but some of us are sent to cross cultural missions and beyond that. So the first thing is being committed to go. Are you committed to being a sent one by Christ as well as a sender of others whom He sent to go where He hasn't called you to go but you can be a partner with them by sending them?

The second takeaway is the commitment to pray. Pray for the harvest is there. The reapers aren't so I want you to pray. I want you to pray first of all for the reapers. The most important thing is to pray. I by faith will promise to pray. I don't know how the Lord is going to lead you to pray for the missionaries, mission field or specific mission endeavor but that is what I love about the tapestry of Christ. He is laying these burdens and passions on all of us in different ways and areas and God begins to weave this intercessory prayer movement of God's people but what we are committed to do is to pray. We want to pray for the reapers, the laborers, and the reaping. You go into the fields sowing with sadness and weeping for this is eternal business. His compassion is guiding us and His passion is leading us but as you are praying for the reaping you're praying "God, bring forth a great harvest. Bring men and women to Christ."

Our objective is not simply to go but our objective is to see men and women come to Christ for the ultimate objective – the glory of God and the joy of their salvation. That is what is upon our hearts and that's what we're praying for. We are praying for the reapers, the harvesters, the laborers, the labor, the reaping, the harvest and then we're praying for the Lord to send out more reapers, into Birmingham, Alabama, North America, and around the world. Be committed to it. I'll confess that I wasn't where you are when I came here.

At Christ Covenant one third of the financial resources were committed to the salaries and the ongoing ministry. One third of it was to the building, facilities and curriculum that was needed and the other third was missions, mercy and benevolence. I was pretty excited about that but then I got here and you said "Harry, we're fifty, fifty." I am always very excited about the faith promise time because that is what gets us there. We are not only praying but we're praying that You will raise up a people with a heart that will send their most prized possessions and I'm not talking about money but I'm talking about your sons and daughters. You may have determined to use my child as a missionary right here in a America in a vocation but God if You called them to be vocational

missionaries cross cultural then put Your hand on them. I take my hands off of them. They are Yours.

The third takeaway is that we are committed to prepare. Jesus prepares people to go. So we will equip you and that's why we're doing this iShare series. We're going to equip you to be a missionary for Gospel evangelism and discipleship in Birmingham but we're also going to equip cross cultural missionaries to go throughout North America or wherever it is. We are going to equip people to get there. We know the problem everybody has – the emptiness of sin, the destruction of false teaching. We know the answer is the Gospel and Jesus Christ. I don't care where people are, the Scriptures are clear. The Gospel doesn't need to be made relevant. It is relevant. I can obscure its relevancy by the way I deliver it but I don't make it relevant. There is nothing more relevant.

Now Lord, how does it land here? What is the configuration of sin and rebellion in this culture? I know what the answer is but how are they asking the questions? Let me learn who they are and what they are asking and what sin has done there so I can come thoughtfully. When Paul went to the Jew first he preached the Gospel. When he went to the marketplace, the Gentiles, he preached the Gospel but he knew how to land where he was, always with the same message on the same mission. He always understood how to do it. God has called us to be prepared as missionaries and to prepare missionaries to go out into the world to make the impact for Jesus Christ. What do you do and how do you do it? Jesus said when you go that He'll prepare you. Don't take a lot of stuff. Just go by faith. Live sacrificially and I want you to go as laborers not loafers.

The other day I was listening to a preacher who said "I'm tired of hearing preachers tell Christians to try harder" and I'm waiting for the finishing of the sentence. Do you mean I'm tired of hearing preachers tell Christians to try harder to be Christians? If so, praise the Lord because I'm with you. When I try harder to get saved I just get further lost. Jesus has done the work for my salvation. I just need to rest in that. Now that I'm saved I actually do try hard. In fact, I'm called to try hard and by Biblical direction you all pay me what I do. It says in I Timothy 5:17, *[17] Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor (work hard) in preaching and teaching.*

Mission endeavors, whether it's Birmingham or around the world, is work. You are not doing it to get saved but it's not easy work. The Holy Spirit will carry you and you will be fully engaged. It's both. There are times in which it seems like you're in the sweetness of the moment and it just seems so effortless but yet you're praying, studying, listening, reaching out, and when someone is sick you reach out and minister to them. God says He will prepare you with the Gospel words and you'll go with the Gospel deeds. You go with the Gospel of peace. God will equip you with what to do, how to do it and where to do it. Some will be receptive and some will reject. Here is how you deal with reception and here is

how you deal with rejection. He is constantly preparing us and He doesn't send us out without equipping us.

The fourth takeaway is being committed to provide. God provides out of the harvest. That's exciting. One of our missionaries came up to me and talked with me about this. We send them out providing, they go into the harvest and now the provisions start coming back. These people learn Christian stewardship. The new missionaries will come from their churches. Antioch received from Jerusalem and then Antioch began to provide. Here take our two best elders Saul and Barnabas. We'll send them out to the world. When the Lord brings to the harvest, it creates the harvest and out of the harvest He brings the resources for the ministry to move on. In the 19th century missionaries went to Brazil. The number two country in sending out missionaries is Brazil. The Lord sent missionaries to Korea which is the number three country in sending out missionaries. The Lord is now providing out of the harvest itself.

That's what will happen. We'll send the missionaries out and they'll do the work. As the Lord blesses the harvest there will be the resources that come up to help support the work there and then send the work somewhere else, but the harvest has already come here. We're able to send it there because the Lord is providing out of the harvest that He has given to us here. The reapers and laborers have come among us, so now we're willing to say that the Lord will provide out of the harvest. We're the harvest. Lord, provide through us as You brought it to us, we now send it from us, out into the world. The harvest has come to us so out of the harvest we'll send it out and when they go out there will be a harvest and out of that harvest it will be sent out until the praise of God covers the earth, as the waters cover the very sea.

So the Lord provides the harvest. The Lord provides reapers for the harvest and then the Lord provides for the reapers out of the harvest. So out of this harvest we'll provide prayer, personal engagement, the resources to go and then as they go the same thing will happen there. Then they will start being receivers there and then senders there as the Lord provides out of that harvest. A missionary stopped me and said "You all sent us out to the Philippines and this year our church sent missionaries to China." That is repeated time and time again.

The fifth takeaway is being committed to share. We share the Gospel in word and deed and it goes around the world because the Gospel is that which changes lives. Dig in the text with me. When you go to the house and you're talking to an individual and the individual responds to you. Then the text says in the house meaning the household because when you reach someone in the house you start reaching the family in the house. Crispus believed and his household. Stephanus believed and his household. Lydia believed and her household. The Philippian jailer believed and his household. Look at the stunning opportunities and the unbelievable implications. I reached someone and they

reached their house – their children, their spouse. Then He says the city begins to receive you. Look what happens to the city.

Here is the sending of a reaper into a harvest that is secure and what happens? Here is a person that comes to Christ and through that person comes a covenant blessing to the family. From that family it goes to other families around them until a whole city has been affected. So no longer will we hear like we heard today that has more houses of prostitution than it does churches. We begin to see the work of the Gospel go forward and the industries of sin begin to fall by the wayside as men and women are saved and changed. As they are saved and changed what they used to go to they don't go to and now they go on to something else and that's the King, Jesus Christ as we send those who lift high the cross of Christ. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. I thank You for Jesus, our Savior. Bless this congregation as we commit ourselves afresh and anew. Thank You for the freshness of this mission's conference every year. Thank You for the fresh challenges, the encouragements and the opportunity we have to partner. We'll be missionaries here and then we'll send the 70 and then Father we'll be a part of what You're doing. As we see it go out with great sacrifice we'll rejoice. Father, we're not just sending laborers (not loafers) but we're also sending lambs (not wolves). So are we lambs and where we go there will be wolves not lambs but we're lambs and we're ready to be slaughtered for Christ that others will be brought to Him. As our God is exalted their joy overflows to their family, their city and then to other nations. O God, from the rising to the setting of the sun, may Jesus be praised and the cross lifted high. I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

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