

Cross Fellowship Church  
Overland Park, KS  
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Luke 10:1-24  
John Crawford

Well, it's been a full morning already. We can close up shop and go home and feel like we did church. It's about 25 minutes later than when I normally get up here to preach, so the temptation would be to cut this message short. Well, that's not happening. This coming Saturday I start a sabbatical, for those of you who don't know or for those of you who have forgotten. I'm going to be on sabbatical from June 1 through August 31. So this is the last time I'm going to preach for a long time. If you think I'm going to cut this short, you're crazy. That's not happening. So get cozy where you are.

This is how thankful you are as a church to allow me and my family this sabbatical and time away from our normal pastoral ministry and duties. Time to rest, time for renewal, a time to recalibrate and reset different patterns of my life, time to recharge, time to address hard issues in my own heart that I want to grow in under this time. I really am thankful, humbled, and encouraged that I have a church family that loves me and my family, that cares about me, and that grants three months to be able to rest, to be renewed, and to recharge. Knowing that ministry is for the long haul and that my family and I can come back recharged and renewed to continue to keep on keeping on. That's our desire and plan. Thank you also to the other elders. Me being away means they have extra duties and extra responsibilities along the way, so I appreciate their desire to care for me well and even take on extra responsibilities.

During the next three months, there's a group of five guys who will rotate through the preaching duties and responsibilities. That's one of the things about my sabbatical that I'm probably most encouraged by: knowing how you'll be blessed and encouraged and how our church will be edified just from these five guys and their preaching of the word on Sunday mornings. I promised Jared, who's going to be preaching next week, that I would get through verse 24 this morning. There's a lot here so we're going to need to dive in really, really quick. We're going to set up the context of this passage here in just a minute. But first what I want us to do is hone in on a specific statement that Jesus makes within this passage. The statement is relevant and true for the time in which he lived, but it's also relevant and true for our day and for us as well.

Look what Jesus says there at the very beginning of verse 2. He tells the 72 disciples that he's sending out, **"The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few."** That was true when Jesus made that statement then 2,000 years ago but it's also true when Jesus looks at us today. Two things to remember when it comes to that statement. We see this urgent need that's true today. First, the harvest is plentiful. Jesus uses that harvest imagery all throughout the gospels, and in a lot of different ways. Sometimes it's used in reference to the Day of Judgment

when people will be judged at the End of Days and the judgment that they're going to face. Other times he uses it in reference to those that have yet to hear, those who have yet to understand, to believe and trust and embrace the message of the kingdom that he is going to come and proclaim and teach. To be perfectly honest with you, I'm not 100% sure how Jesus is using "harvest" here within this passage. It's probably a reference maybe to both here: those who have yet to hear the message of the kingdom, as well to those within that group who are going to reject that message and who will incur the judgment that comes with the rejection that message. What he's telling the disciples and telling us today is the harvest is plentiful. There's a plethora of people out there. Billions upon billions of people within our world who have yet to bow their knee and to embrace and to receive and trust and believe in Jesus as their Messiah and trust and embrace the message of the kingdom.

Secondly, he says the laborers, though, are few. This is where the urgent need comes in. We have this plentiful harvest, but we have very few people, very few laborers, very few workers who are willing to be sent and commissioned to go out to this harvest to proclaim the kingdom of God, to proclaim the Messiah King that has come, to rescue people by God's grace from the judgment that they're due if they reject this message. There's a plentiful harvest, but the urgent need exists, because the laborers are few. This was true in Jesus' day and it's true in our day as well. So that begs the question: If that's the urgent need, what are we to do? How are we to respond? If this is the reality of the day in which Jesus lived, the reality of the day in which we live, how should we respond?

In the rest of our passage this morning, this is what Jesus is going to tell us. He's going to tell us how we should respond in light of the fact that the harvest is plentiful and the workers are few. What should we do in light of that reality that was true in his day and that's true in our day as well? How should we respond?

The first way we should respond is: we should pray earnestly for more laborers to be sent into the harvest. I love this. The very first thing he says in verse 2, he makes this statement, **"The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few."** You're like, "Well, what should we do? Should we have a missions campaign? Should we show a bunch of sad faces on the screen up there? Should we give a bunch of sad statistics? Should we try and make people feel guilty and then they'll go and do something about it?" Here's what we should do. Look at verse 2: **"Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."** That's the first response we should have in light of this urgent need that exists. The first response isn't all of these other things that I mentioned. The first response is to fall on our knees, to fall on our faces, and to pray and to plead and to beg the Lord to raise up more laborers, more workers who would be sent out into the harvest.

Think about that. Is that a normal part of your prayers? Is this a normal request that is coming out of your mouth on a daily basis? Lord, the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few, so within the context of Cross Fellowship Church, Lord, raise up more people. Raise up

your laborers. Raise up more missionaries to send to the harvest field. Are you praying that? Are you praying, Lord be the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few? Raise up more church planters. Raise up more church revitalizers that can plant and revitalize them in Kansas City and beyond. Raise up more laborers in the life of our church who are willing to go in the different spheres of influence where God has placed them in their neighborhood, in their workplaces, and different other social contexts, that they would live with a mission mindset that is seeking to sow seeds of the gospel. Is this a normal part of your prayer life to pray that everybody in the life of our church would live as a laborer for the gospel in the harvest in whatever way God might call them to? That that's the first place we start? That if we want to be a church that lives on mission, that sees people come to know Christ, that is baptizing people week in, week out, every single week. The first place to start in becoming that church isn't to rush out and go, but the first thing is to pray that God would raise up more and more laborers, to live as a labor for the gospel in whatever context God has placed them.

Secondly, we're to go into the harvest field. We skipped over this in verse 1, but bear with me. Verse 1 sets the context for the commission that Jesus is making here. **“After this the Lord appointed 72 others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go.”** So if you remember from last week, we saw a major turning point in chapter 9 verse 51. Jesus began to set his face toward Jerusalem. He's up north in the region of Galilee and he's about to make his way down to Jerusalem where he's going to suffer, be rejected, and die. But as he makes his way to Jerusalem, he finds 72 followers of his and he sends these 72 on ahead of him to go through the towns and the villages that he's about to pass through and he wants them to serve as a forerunner, like John the Baptist did. They're going ahead of him on his way to Jerusalem. They're entering into these towns and villages that Jesus is about to come and pass through and they're preparing people for Jesus' arrival. They're telling people that the Messiah is coming. They're telling people that the kingdom of God that is nigh and that is to come and they're preparing people with this message all along the way.

When Jesus sees that the harvest is plentiful, he doesn't just want us to pray, “Lord, praise up more laborers.” Instead, he also wants us to go. He sends out laborers into his harvest field. We're to pray for more laborers, but at the same time we're to be the answer to our prayers, because the very people who are being sent out as laborers are the very people that he's exhorted and commanded to pray for more laborers. It's the same case when it comes to us. For these 72, it literally meant that they left everything—sandals and money bags and all the stuff we're about to see—and they literally went on ahead of Jesus to all of these different towns and all of these different villages preparing people for the coming of the Messiah.

That's what it might mean for some of us. I don't know exactly what this looks like for you to go as a laborer into the harvest field. Have you prayed about that? For some of you, it might literally mean moving to Romania to work alongside Brett and Alyson. I don't know. You

ask the Lord that? We've got two ladies in North Africa. It might mean moving and going on a short-term trip there, or moving there and working alongside of them and their team. For some it might mean going in the different neighborhoods or different workplaces and asking yourself, the harvest is plentiful in my neighborhood or in my workplace or in these other spheres of influence in which God has placed me. How am I going there? How am I intentionally going there and proclaiming the gospel in a different context? What's that look like for me? Am I going as a laborer? Am I praying and asking the Lord what that might look like for me? So we pray.

We go, but Jesus unpacks how we go. We go expecting danger. This sounds fun. This is exactly what he says. Look at the rest of verse 3. **“Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.”** Anybody know what a wolf does to a lamb? This would be a great place for that YouTube video. Wolves rip lambs to pieces. They slaughter lambs. They eat lambs for lunch. A lot of times when we're praying, “Lord, where do you want me to go?”—if you're praying, “It's too dangerous to go there, so I know God is not calling me to go there, because God would not tell me to go to a place that's dangerous.” Have you read verse 3? Jesus is intentionally sending these 72 into danger. He doesn't say, oh, it's too dangerous there. Go over here. No. That's not at all what he does. He intentionally sends them into danger.

He does the same thing for us. Proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah King, it's not like you're going on a nice stroll in the park. Not everybody is going to like what you have to say. Not everybody is going to roll out the red carpet and say, I'm so glad that you finally came to tell us this. There are going to be some who are offended, some who are threatened, some who will also ostracize you. Some who make fun of you and belittle you. Some, depending on where you go, might even try to kill you. But at the same time, that's part of going. That's part of the life of a laborer. We go expecting danger.

Secondly, we should go urgently. It's what Jesus is getting out in verse four. Look at verse four with me. He says, **“Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road.”** These specific instructions that we talked about a few weeks ago, are specific instructions to those 72 at that particular place in time on that particular mission. He's telling them, don't carry those things. What that means, then, is that it's okay if you bring your sandals. It's okay if you bring your knapsack and a few dollars along the way. You can greet people on the road if you feel like the Lord is leading you to. These are specific instructions given to the disciples then, not necessarily given for us today. One of the reasons we know that is that later on in Luke he's going to give the exact opposite instructions to the disciples and tell them carry a money bag. Take their sandals.

The point in this is wherever we go we should have a sense of urgency, and that's the point in all this. Don't get distracted by talking with somebody on the road just to talk about football or the weather or whatever that might be. Don't be distracted by the money bags or spending money. If you're in a hurry, if you're urgently trying to go somewhere, you're going to

go. You're not going to be weighed down and distracted by all of these other things that could take you off the mission and the focus of what you're trying to do, and that's the point that he's trying to make here. These 72, they're going on down the road. Jesus is following them. They don't know when Jesus is going to finally get to the towns and the villages where they are. They better hurry up. Their task is urgent, because the Messiah King is coming. Don't get sidetracked in some way, and you better be going around and sharing it.

That's the same thing for all of us. Jesus isn't coming down the road, but he's coming back to this earth. We don't know when. We've been commissioned ahead of him to serve as his representatives and his ambassadors to proclaim this message. We need to do that urgently. We don't need to be tied down and sidetracked and distracted by all of these other things. Instead, this message that we proclaim is a message of urgency, so we need to go into this plentiful harvest with the sense of urgency.

Where do we go proclaiming the kingdom of God and the opportunity of peace with God? It's what we see next in verse 5. **“Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace be to this house!’ And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. 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. Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick in it and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’”**

So there's a whole lot here. We don't have time to get into necessarily every single word here, but this is what the ministry of these 72 that Jesus has commissioned—this is what their ministry entails and involves. They're to go into these towns and proclaim that the kingdom of God is near. We've talked about this before. The kingdom of God is a reference to God's rule and God's reign here on earth that the Messiah King is to usher in when he comes. They're going out there. They're proclaiming this message that the kingdom of God is near.

As they do that, they're to cast out demons and do all of these healings, which give further proof and evidence that the kingdom is actually here, that God's rule and God's reign is here on this earth. Peace is going to be pronounced over those who receive their message. Think about that. If a King is coming to usher in his kingdom and you resist it and you said no, your kingdom is not going to set up shop here, I'm not going to let you rule and reign over me, you can rest assured you're not going to experience peace.

Instead you're not going to be a friend of that King anymore. You're going to be at enmity with that King. You're going to be at odds with that King. Therefore, you're not going to experience peace with that King. You're going to experience the King's wrath and judgment that is coming. That's exactly what Jesus is getting at with his disciples. Those who receive the 72 and the message they're proclaiming will live at peace with the King and his kingdom. This is who we are. This is the task that we've been given. We are representatives, ambassadors, and messengers of the King of the universe who is coming to this earth to establish his reign and

rule to cover the earth. We've been sent ahead of time to let people know about this great kingdom, how they could live at peace with the King and his kingdom that his coming, and that those who bow their knee to Jesus, the King, those who trust in Jesus, the King, and believe that he died on a cross and took the punishment that they deserve for the ways that they've rebelled against God, that they will be saved and rescued and that they will enter into this great kingdom where they will worship this King.

That's the message that you and I have been given. Isn't that a privilege? We're not trying to be mean to people or intolerant or narrow-minded. We've been sent as ambassadors with this message of hope and deliverance and this message of this great kingdom that people can be a part of. Wouldn't love and humility cause us to go as laborers to proclaim this message to those within the harvest that is plentiful?

As we do that, though, we need to go knowing that God's judgment is real. This is what Jesus says next. Look at Verse 10. **“But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, ‘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.’”**

So we've talked about this before. Jesus brought this up. A common Jewish practice in that day is when Jews would walk through Gentile territory, before they would walk back into Jewish territory, they would wipe off the dust of the Gentile territory from their feet, from their sandals, and that was a symbolism of judgment against Gentile peoples and the Gentile lands. This is what Jesus is telling those 72 to do. He explains how severe the judgment of these towns is going to be if they reject the message that these 72 share with them. He talks about the severity of their judgment. Look at Verse 12. **“I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.”** Everybody remembers Sodom, right? Probably the most wicked, godless, and depraved city in the entire Old Testament. God destroyed it with fire. In verse 12, Jesus is saying that the judgment of those towns that reject the 72 and their message is going to be more severe than the judgment of Sodom. Those 72 hear that and they're thinking, nobody can incur a judgment that's more severe than Sodom. Sodom incurred the worst judgment of anybody. But that's exactly what Jesus says, that those who reject their message and all the miracles that are performed that point to the fact that Jesus is the Messiah King, those who reject that, their judgment is going to be more severe than Sodom.

He makes the same point in verse 13. **“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more bearable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades.”**

You see what Jesus is doing? Those, again, are two wicked, depraved, and godless Old Testament cities that God greatly judged, and Jesus compares these two wicked cities that

with these three cities that Jesus did a lot of ministry in: Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. These cities were in the region of Galilee where he did all of these miracles and performed all of these healings and he proclaimed the message of the kingdom over and over again. These people saw with their very own eyes the Messiah King. They saw all the miracles he performed that demonstrated that he was the King and they heard with their very own ears about the kingdom that was to come. They saw it, they heard it, and they rejected it.

Because of that, they had more revelation than those towns in the Old Testament, therefore their judgment is going to be more severe and stricter than the judgment of those in the Old Testament. There's a lot we could get into there, but we don't have time. The point I want to make here is: When we go out, we're not playing games. Do you see what is at stake? We pray for laborers. We go out. We go urgently. We go into danger. We go proclaiming this message of the kingdom, this message of peace, but do you see what's at stake? People's eternal destiny is at stake.

They reject that message. They don't believe that message. They don't embrace that message. They don't bow down to Jesus as King and embrace the message of the kingdom, then their judgment is going to be great. It's going to be just like Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. Judgment is coming. So we don't just live complacent, apathetic lives when it comes to evangelism and when it comes to sharing the gospel, when it comes to going. Somebody else will do that. I can do that tomorrow. See what's at stake here. Judgment is at stake.

It then leads to this next point. Jesus is commissioning us. Here's how we should respond to the fact that the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. We're to pray for laborers. We're to go ourselves into the harvest. But third, as we go, we need to be careful of where we find our ultimate source of joy. This is what we see next. Look at verse 17 there. Jesus has sent out the 72. They're running back to him; they finally meet up with him along the way. **"The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!' And he said to them, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you.'"**

I love this response. You would think that since they've been sent out to wolves, they're going to come out all bruised and battered and in despair and depressed. That's how you'd probably return if I sent you to a bunch of wolves. But instead he sends them to the wolves and they return with joy. That's weird. Right? But do you see why they return with joy? Because of how God worked through them and how God gave them power and authority and did great ministry through them. That's what they mean there in verse 17—**"Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!"** meaning they didn't cast out demons in their own strength and ability. "They're subject to us in your name. It's by your name, by your authority, by your power." So what Jesus is getting at in verses 18 and 19, he talks about Satan falling like

lightning from heaven, giving them power and authority over serpents and scorpions—that's the reference to the power and authority that Jesus has given them to cast out all of these demons and the evil spirits. The disciples are joyful.

But look what Jesus says. He says something really interesting in verse 20. Jesus is a party pooper a little bit. They're all joyful for how God worked through them in the ministry and the how he empowered them to do all of this ministry. He corrects them a little bit in Verse 20 when it comes to their joy. **"Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."** Do you see what Jesus is saying here? This hit me hard this week. He's saying that's fine if you're joyful about me working through you and having a power and authority to do all of these things and me doing ministry through you, but your joy shouldn't be rooted in that.

Where you find your ultimate source of joy shouldn't be placed in the fact that Jesus empowers us and does ministry through us. I think that should bring us some joy. But our ultimate source of joy shouldn't be rooted in those things. If your joy is rooted in your fruitfulness and success and ministry, then your joy is going to be like a rollercoaster ride. There are going to be days you're going to be up. There are days you're going to be down. There are going to be days you're halfway in between and your joy is going to be up and down, as good as ministry is going. Fruit, I'm up. No fruit, I'm down. Success in ministry, seeing God work through me, seeing God empowering me to do all of these great things, I'm up. Struggling to see any fruits. Struggling to see any success. Struggling to see anything that God is doing through me. I'm down.

And where your joy is directly tied to your fruitfulness and success in ministry, let me encourage you, never do that. I've done that and struggle with doing that. It makes for an awful life. Don't do that. You're like, where should I root my joy? Aren't those good things? Yeah, those are good things, but don't root your joy in that. Don't make that your primary place, your ultimate source of joy. Instead, where do you find that? Listen to what Jesus says in Verse 20. We're to root our joy, not in our fruitfulness or success in ministry, but in the fact that our names are written in heaven. That's permanent. That's fixed. That doesn't change. That won't go up or down, because of Jesus' work on the cross. Nothing, nothing can alter. Nothing can change that.

So let me encourage you, when Stephanie goes out to Middle East, Stephanie, don't root your joy in ministry and your success or fruitfulness in ministry. On your worst days of ministry, you can still have joy not because of how fruitful you are, but because you know your name is written in heaven. And that's true for Stephanie and that's true for you and ministry in your neighborhood, your workplace, within the life of this church, working with the kids on Sunday mornings, wherever you minister as parents discipling your kids. Don't root joy in your ministry. Root your joy in the fact that your name is written in heaven.

The fourth thing to remember as we go is this: Depend on God to do the most



important work of ministry. This is what we see final through in Verse 21. Luke writes this. **“In that same hour, he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit.”** The beginning of Verse 21 is one of my favorite verses in all the Bible. I love this. Jesus is rejoicing. We don't get a lot of verses like that. This word for rejoice is stronger than those other words for joy and rejoice that we saw earlier. It means to be overjoyed. There's this exuberant sense of joy, an extreme, abundant joy. You don't have a Savior who just has a scowl on his face all the time. Jesus is joyful, exuberant, radiant, joyful. What caused him to have this joy? Look at the rest of Verse 21 there.

**“He said, ‘I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.’”**

Do you see why Jesus is joyful here? Jesus is joyful because God the Father has hidden the message of the kingdom and the reality that Jesus is the Messiah from the wise and understanding of this age. The wise and understanding of this age within the context here is probably a reference to the big shots, the Jewish religious leaders of the day, like the scribes and the Pharisees.

But here's the reason why he's most joyful. God has revealed those truths to little children, which in all likelihood is a metaphorical reference to those who are insignificant, to those who are unimportant, the people on the lower rung of society. That brings Jesus joy. If you believe the gospel message and if you believe that Jesus is the Messiah King, then that makes Jesus rejoice. Jesus is rejoicing with exuberant joy, because that reality has been revealed to you and you understand it and believe it and he rejoices because of it.

The key points I want us to see here are: We pray. We go declaring this message. We go tying our joy not to the fruitfulness and success and ministry, but we go tying our joy to the fact that our names are written in heaven. As we go, we also need to realize this: unless God gives people understanding and reveals the truth of the message of the kingdom and reveals to people that Jesus is the Messiah King, unless God does that divine work of design revelation in people's hearts, there ain't no way they're going to understand it. They can't. Because they can't understand, they can't see, without God divinely revealing it to them. It's a secret to them. They can't understand it without God doing divine work to allow them to understand. That's a work that only he can do.

This is huge. We're to go. We're to pray. But we're to depend on him for the work that only he can do. That's a good thing, because if it was up to you to coerce somebody and persuade them with your eloquence and with your rhetorical, persuasive, articulate debate skills to get somebody to believe the gospel message, nobody would ever understand it. Not only that, but if it was up to that person who hears it to rely on their own natural ability to understand and to come to saving faith and trust in the gospel message, nobody would ever come to saving

faith. They're not going to believe that message. That's crazy.

The only way anybody is going to listen to this message about Jesus being a King who is coming to establish God's reign and rule on this earth, the only way anybody is going to trust and believe and understand that and come to saving faith in that is if is God divinely giving them understanding and reveals to them the reality that that message is true. That's the only hope that we have as we go here, proclaiming that message.

Think about the different contexts in which God has placed you—that's your harvest right now. Your harvest is plentiful. Your neighborhood, your workplace, maybe going overseas, some other context. Are you praying every day, Lord, raise up, this harvest is plentiful? God, I plead with you, raise up laborers. Secondly, are you an answer to your own prayer? Are you going? And as you go, are you going urgently? Are you going expecting danger? Are you going proclaiming the message of the kingdom? Giving people the opportunity of peace? Is your joy tied to the fact that your name is written in heaven? And as you go, are you going in confidence, knowing it's not ultimately up to you to convert a heart? It's not up to you to cause somebody to be able to see and understand? You're faithful and you're responsible to share, but you're ultimately depending on the God of the universe to do supernatural divine work in people's hearts, to be able to see and understand that it's ultimately up to him.

Think about that this week. Who can you share with? Where can you go? Who can you go to? Who do you need to be more urgently sharing with? What does that look like for you? How can you pray for more laborers? Pray for all of us today, months from now, years to come, that we would see more and more of ourselves as being evangelists, a gospel-sharing church, mission-sharing church. People who pray, people who go, and people who depend on God to do the work.

Let me pray. Lord, thank you for our time together this morning. Thank you for your gospel, for the work of God that you have done in our hearts and in our lives. Lord, as we gather together and finish our time together by celebrating the Lord's Supper, I pray that you would apply this message in whatever way that you ultimately see fit. In Jesus' name we pray these things, amen.

Why don't you stand with me? As we do, we'll conclude our time together this morning by celebrating the Lord's Supper. In the Lord's Supper, the bread is symbolic. It's a picture of Jesus' body that was broken for us on the cross. The cup is symbolic of Jesus' blood that was shed for us on the cross. That's what we celebrate as we partake the Lord's Supper. This is the message that we go proclaiming. This is the message that we believe and this is the message that we share with others.