

## Life in the Kingdom: Hospitality and the Kingdom

Luke 10:1-11

May 22, 2016

Dan Hoffman

**~To please the Father Jesus sends His disciples into His harvest field in His authority, on His dime, and with His plan for success ~**

Over the last several weeks we have been looking at what Jesus meant when He spoke about the gospel. And what we have found is that it has a lot more to do with abundant life here and now than with life after death. While it is true that when we put our trust in Jesus we can avoid hell and go to heaven when we die, Jesus spent a lot more time emphasizing how people can live in the power of God's kingdom which is presently breaking into our world.

So Jesus described God's good news saying:

"The time has come... the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"<sup>1</sup>

And then He described what it looks like for God's kingdom to come near. So He said The kingdom of heaven is like a man scattering seed on four soils, and one of them sprouted and produced a crop 100 or 60 or 30 times what was sown.<sup>2</sup> And the kingdom of heaven is like treasure that a man found in a field. And in his joy he went and sold all he had and bought that field.<sup>3</sup> Kingdom life is amazingly abundant and valuable!

And the evidence Jesus gave that the kingdom was in fact among people was that the power of God was evident in His ministry. So Jesus told the Pharisees: "if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you."<sup>4</sup>

And then Jesus told His disciples that because He was returning to the Father we who believe in Him would do the works He had been doing, and even greater things.<sup>5</sup> We would live in the power of the kingdom – that was Jesus' good news!

...

Now some of you will remember Anthony Brown who spoke at our Spiritual Emphasis week a couple years back. He told a story about a few of his friends who used to ride a ferry back and forth across a small river in order to get to school. And this involved a fair bit of waiting during peak periods as the ferry could only take a few cars at a time.

---

<sup>1</sup> Mark 1:15

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 13:1-12

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 13:44

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 12:28

<sup>5</sup> John 14:11-12

And so the friends decided that they wanted to redeem the wait by striking up conversations with the other commuters in the hope that they could bring Christ into some of those conversations.

And in brainstorming how they were going to do this one of them decided she was going to bake some cupcakes that she could offer people waiting in their cars. This was going to be their ice breaker. And so they put their plan to action.

After a few weeks people began getting out of their cars and chatting as a group and also asking them why they were doing this. And they got to tell people what it meant to have God active in their lives. And the tag line they used to connect to their ice breaker was “Heaven’s not pie in the sky by and by; it’s cake on a plate while you wait.”

And today’s text is very much a ‘cake on a plate while you wait’ text. It’s about how abundant, eternal life in Christ is not something Jesus wants us to wait for until we die, rather it is for us to enjoy right now.

...

So if you’ve got your Bibles with you, or can see one in the pew in front of you, please open it up to Luke chapter 10. You will find this on page 734.

In this text we get a story of Jesus sending disciples into the cities He was about to visit so they could be prepared for His arrival. This is Jesus’ strategy for how to introduce people to God and His kingdom.

And the disciples followed Jesus’ commands and what we find is that it provoked the Father to pleasure and brought Jesus joy. In fact just a few verses after our text today the disciples return with stories of God encounters and we read:

At that same time Jesus was filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit, and He said... “Father, it pleased You to do it this way.” (Luke 10:21 NLT)

Jesus is full of joy because the Father saw fit to work through the lives of His disciples to bring Himself glory. And this is amazing! When we partner with God in what He is doing, in the place He has put us, we have the opportunity to provoke God to pleasure. Do you want in on that?

So the big idea today is that: **To please the Father Jesus sends His disciples into His harvest field in His authority, on His dime, and with His plan for success.**

Look with me at Luke 10 starting in verse 1.

[Read Luke 10:1]

**So To please the Father Jesus sends His disciples into His harvest field in His authority...**

Now we've already covered the Father's pleasure – that is why Jesus did everything He did. And He invites His disciples (and us) to be fueled by the same desire. So He sends them out for the Father's pleasure.

Now the 12 main disciples aren't part of this group. These are unspectacular men and women who lived in the Galilee region and had been following Jesus. They had heard Him teach and seen His miracles, but they were unspectacular in and of themselves – we don't even know their names! So they were His disciples like we are His disciples.

And Jesus selects 72 of them – why 72 we don't know – but He divides them into twos, and commissions them to go ahead of Him into the surrounding towns where He was about to go. Jesus knew His harvest was ready there. That's why He puts His people in these places.

So Jesus planned to show up in power, but He wanted people to be ready. So He sent some rumor spreaders out to let people know that God's kingdom was at hand. They were to gossip about what they had heard and seen. "God is moving in Galilee and His kingdom is headed this way. Get ready to meet Jesus." This was their job. And in verse 17 we read:

The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in Your name." (Luke 10:17)

So in community with each other Jesus' disciples moved out in His authority and got results; and when He heard this Jesus couldn't contain His joy. Jesus was a happy guy. Amen? I can imagine Him grinning from ear to ear as He prays "Father, this is what You were pleased to do."<sup>6</sup>

And it is Jesus' disciples, working out Jesus' commands that bring this result. So let's dig into what Jesus told these men and women to do starting in verse 2:

[Read Luke 10:2-4]

Now there are a few cultural things here. So Jesus tells them not to greet anyone on the road as a way of saying "don't get side tracked from the mission I'm sending you on" – they would have got that. But notice primarily that **To please the Father Jesus sends His disciples into His harvest field in His authority, on His dime...**

So this is Jesus' harvest; He's the Lord of it. And His harvest is plentiful. And He's looking for good employees to join the family business.

And all that Jesus asks is that we pray that He will send out workers. In other words our first role in His kingdom is to ask Him to do the very thing He wants to

---

<sup>6</sup> Luke 10:21

do. This is the same thing we get in the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus teaches us to pray:

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be Your name,  
Your kingdom come,  
Your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:9-10)

We are to partner with God by praying for His will to happen.

And Jesus asks those He sends to pray for workers. So the expectation is that as they pray they will receive the desire to go. That means Jesus isn't asking you to pray that He will send me into His harvest. Verse 3 says "Go! I'm sending you." And pray this so that My will might become your will.

And "will" or "desire" is pivotal here. See Jesus isn't actually desperate for labourers to do what He wants done. He doesn't need our help. But He is looking for labourers that He can share the joy of the kingdom with. The harvest is the exciting part of the job. Tilling the soil and planting seed is hard work, watering doesn't show immediate results, but when the harvest is ready it's just a matter of collecting the bounty. And Jesus says His harvest is ready. He just wants us to find out where He has planted and join Him in bringing it in. This is the fun part, and He wants us to want in on this. He wants excited laborers.

...

Jesus is also the one passing out the wages. He says "don't bring a purse or bag or sandals" when you are working for Me. Remember you're not helping Me. I'm letting you in on this for you. So watch Me provide. There is blessing involved in bringing in Jesus' harvest. It's exciting to watch people be transformed when they encounter Jesus. Haven't you witnessed this?

As an aside the point of this text is not that it's important to pay pastors – there are other texts for that and for the record I'm in favor of it – but the provision Jesus is talking about here is the ability everyone who is part of the harvest gets as they see the fruit come in.

...

Now in the next seven verses Jesus gets into the details of exactly how these men and women were to spread the rumor that God's kingdom was advancing. And this is where we are going to spend the rest of our time. So **To please the Father Jesus sends His disciples into His harvest field in His authority, on His dime, and with His plan for success.** And while this plan was designed for the Middle Eastern culture of the day, the power of it is that it was also designed with the disciples of the 21<sup>st</sup> century Prince George church in mind as well. This is Jesus at work. And this is how He wants us to spread the rumor among our neighbours that His kingdom is breaking into our city and the King is on His way.

Here's the plan: first Jesus tells His disciples to be a blessing to those He puts in their path, then foster real relationships with those people, and then provide for their needs and pray for God's provision in their lives, and only finally, when the kingdom of God is breaking into their world, are we to share Jesus' good news with them. In Jesus' model it is only after people have witnessed the power of the kingdom that He expects them to choose to be part of it.

So let's walk through the next seven verses looking at Jesus' plan. Verse 5:

[Read Luke 10:5-6]

Jesus says "Bless people with My peace; this is your job." So Jesus believed that our neighbours and the members of our community and city will only see God's kingdom as valuable if they see us as a blessing. Actually God has always desired that when His people are surrounded by those who aren't part of His kingdom we will bring His blessing to them. This goes all the way back to Genesis 12 where God told Abraham He was going to bless the whole world through him. And we see it powerfully in Jeremiah when Israel was exiled in Babylon. God told them:

Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce... Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper." (Jeremiah 29:5-7)

So Jesus calls us to bless our neighbours. Now there are a couple of angles to this. The first is simply developing the habit of speaking blessings over those we come in contact with. And this isn't generally a default human behavior.

Now the majority say nice things about people when they can hear us, but I would wager that most of the conversations you hear, or are part of, about neighbours or co-workers or classmates who aren't present, have a negative bent to them. Right? We are constantly complaining about people. This is human nature.

So when my neighbours are blaring their music I mutter "I just wish his stereo would blow up!" And when their dog is barking at all hours of the night I imagine scenarios of how this dog might fall ill after eating something unfortunate. Or I hope that our other neighbours who feel the need to smoke marijuana all summer long will move somewhere else. These are confessions of a pastor, so I can only imagine what diabolical things the rest of you people would come up with in these scenarios – I'm just kidding!

The point is it takes discipline to do something other than simply complain about people. And so the first thing Jesus calls for is that we pray blessings on those we come in contact with. This is how our hearts will connect with His own for these people. As long as our primary feelings are annoyance or indifference I

can imagine God saying something like “I’m glad you never share the gospel with these people because you hate them, while I love them!”

So we need to pray God’s blessing on people. Now there are lots of ways to do this. So perhaps develop the habit of walking around your block once a day, or drive home the long way through your neighbourhood, and as you pass the two or three houses to the left and right of your own and the six or so across the street make a point of praying for them. Pray for earthly prosperity as well as the ultimate blessing of encountering the kingdom.

If you don’t know their names then bring them a plate of cookies and tell them you are interested in getting to know your neighbours. Get out there and bless!

...

Now this is not something Nikki and I have mastered, but in attempting to extend the peace of Christ to our neighbours we’ve tried a few things. So we try to spend time in our front yard. This makes it possible to actually bump into our neighbours, and that’s a start. And some of the flowers we plant even survive!

Or, while I’m not a huge fan of everything Halloween stands for, I am a huge fan of connecting with people who mostly hide out in their houses all year. So for Halloween Nikki and I have set up a fire pit at the end of our driveway and offered kids a warm up station where they can cook s’mores. And kids are always followed by parents, so we have the opportunity to connect with them and create good will in the community.

Other people have started a block watch or moved their BBQ to the front porch from the back. There are lots of ways to connect with neighbours and bless them if you put your mind to it.

...

And Jesus says bless them with “peace”. Now in Hebrew “peace” is the word “shalom”. And this is more than a simple absence of strife; it refers to complete well being in every aspect of life. So harmony, fulfillment, safety, good relationship, financial prosperity and both physical and spiritual health. This is what Jesus calls us to speak into the lives of those we come in contact with.

But notice in the text we aren’t simply to wish blessing on people we are to bring Christ’s blessing with us. Jesus says “when you enter a house... if there is a person of peace there then your peace will rest on them.” So the peace we extend is attached to us and rubs off on those we meet. Friends, does Christ’s peace rest on you? Do you bring it into your work-place and neighbourhood? Does your presence bless people?

Let’s keep going. Look at verse 7.

[Read Luke 10:7-8]

Hospitality was an essential component of first century Middle Eastern culture. So when a person traveled between cities the onus was on the host to do anything necessary to lodge anyone who asked.

But Jesus connects this cultural norm with another idea, namely that a worker is worthy of their wages. This comes from the Old Testament principle that it is not right to muzzle an ox who is treading out the grain,<sup>7</sup> but Jesus' point is that people who are in the business of extending His peace to their neighbours should not feel guilty about enjoying any good thing they receive along the way. After all the value of extending God's kingdom to these people is far greater than anything they might get in return. And, like God is the one who blesses us while we work for Him, so when we are received by people it is actually us who is blessing them not the other way around. Make sure that's true of you.

But then Jesus goes even a step further. "Eat what is offered (or whatever is offered) to you." Now remember Jews had some very strict ideas about what could and could not be eaten. But here Jesus says don't let the fact that the people you are reaching out to are different from you be a hindrance to the good news. Don't turn down hospitality no matter who it comes from. God is at work.

Now notice that Jesus' take on hospitality is very different from what ours usually is. So usually when we talk about hospitality we emphasize the importance of extending it. But here Jesus tells us to accept hospitality to spread the gospel.

This is significant. Remember the point of this text is that Jesus is sending us into His harvest field. Our job isn't to go out and convert people. Jesus is just calling us to partner with Him in bringing in His harvest. So He is already at work in the lives He wants us to bring in. There are people in our neighbourhoods and workplaces who are "verse 6 people of peace". God is drawing them towards His kingdom. And these are the people we are looking for.

And so Jesus says work to build relationships with those who are hospitable to you. This is a sign that they are being prepared to receive God's kingdom.

...

The second thing that is important here is the simple emphasis Jesus puts on building relationships by eating with people. And this is something Jesus did so often that some have said "Jesus ate His way through the Gospels."<sup>8</sup>

So His first miracle was turning water into wine at a wedding; He ate with tax collectors like Levi and Zacchaeus and Pharisees and prostitutes. He fed crowds of 4000 and 5000. He instituted the Last Supper and told us to prepare to feast with Him at His return. And there are a lot more instances in-between. Jesus spent more time eating and drinking with people than just about anything else.

---

<sup>7</sup> Deuteronomy 25:4

<sup>8</sup> <https://markrglanville.wordpress.com/2012/07/20/jesus-ate-his-way-through-the-gospels-eaten-with-a-tax-collector-recently/> (Accessed May 20, 2016)

And many of these encounters were at the homes of people who invited Him in. And by accepting their invitation He demonstrated that He accepted them.

So as you interact with your neighbours intentionally pray blessings on them; and as you do watch for those who extend hospitality to you and accept them. This is where God is working.

Third, look down at verse 9

[Read Luke 10:9a]

Okay, this is a big one. Now healing the sick was obviously Jesus' work. Not every rabbi in the first century was casting out demons and bringing people back from the dead, but Jesus sure was. And so here Jesus invites His disciples to join Him in His job.

Now there are two sides to this that are both equally important. So first on the non-miraculous side, it is not uncommon for people to open up about their needs as we bless them and get to know them. And those needs may include illness or loss or family issues or employment struggles – whatever. And here Jesus says join Me in doing My work in these instances. Bring My healing into these houses with whatever gifts and abilities I've given you. Heal them.

But there is a second side here as well. We know from the context that when Jesus talked about healing it was almost always miraculous in nature. So as people share with you, do whatever you can to alleviate their suffering, and then ask them if you can pray for God to work in their situations too. Pray for healing. Pray for employment. Pray for restoration of relationships. Pray for their needs. And expect God to show up.

Now at this point I think people feel a bit of reservation. We worry, "What happens if I pray and God doesn't answer. Then they aren't going to believe!"

But remember this is Jesus' harvest. He's the one who is doing the work of planting and watering and growing these people to be ready to come to faith. All He asks of us is to look for where He is at work and bring in His harvest. So Jesus says expect to see the miraculous. God is going to answer these prayers, and we are going to get to witness it. Do you want to see the miraculous? Get into Jesus' harvest field.

...

So be a blessing in the place God has put you. Extend His peace to your neighbours and co-workers and classmates. And look for people He is working in, people who do things like extend hospitality to you. God is at work here. And then bring any healing you are able into their homes, and pray for any healing you can't bring yourself. Jesus says when it comes to His harvest He is going to show up.



And finally look at the second half of verse 9.

[Read Luke 10:9b-11]

It's only after Jesus' disciples have been a blessing, and looked for those God is working in, and brought healing into their homes that we are commanded to preach the gospel – the good news that the kingdom of God has come near.

In other words it is only after our neighbours, our family members, whoever, have experienced the kingdom through us that we should preach it. A similar thing happened at Pentecost. Jesus told His disciples:

Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift My Father promised, which you have heard Me speak about. For... in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit... you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:4-8)

Friends, Jesus only wants people to share His message once they've been filled with His Spirit. It's only then that we look like Him, and this is His harvest, not ours, so He is responsible for the creation of the fruit. Our job (and blessing) is just to join Him in bringing it in.

And this is what verses 10 and 11 are all about. Jesus says "When you get out there and do everything I've said and people don't respond it's no skin off your back, it's just the dust off your shoes – don't feel bad about it. This is My harvest field, not yours. And I'm the one who is preparing people for My kingdom. You, get into My harvest field, but remember the results are My domain."

So brothers and sisters of Fort George, God is at work in our city – amen? He has an abundant harvest field here. It's His harvest! And what He wants is to bless us with enjoying the fruit of His reward. So Jesus is on His way into our community and into the lives of those He has placed us beside; the only question is will we get out and gossip about the kingdom we've seen breaking into our world and in the process prepare people for meeting their King in person?