

Reconciling

Last week, as we began to examine these precious words given in Luke chapter 10, where we see Jesus sending out more disciples to carry the "Good News" of His saving grace, we noted that their stepping forth into those towns and villages to give His gospel would not be without difficulty. That they were venturing out as lambs onto a battlefield of ravenous wolves. And that there would surely be sufferings along the way.

Today, I'd like for us to consider why the going forth of these disciples is so vitally important to the souls of those that these missionaries would encounter.

Join with me again as I read these words of the gospel that I read to us last week given to us here in Luke chapter 10, beginning with verse 1,

¹After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. ²Then He said to them, "The harvest truly *is* great, but the laborers *are* few; therefore, pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. ³Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves. ⁴Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals; and greet no one along the road. ⁵But whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house.' ⁶And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on it; if not, it will return to you. ⁷And remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not go from house to house. ⁸Whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you. ⁹And heal the sick there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' ¹⁰But whatever city you enter, and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, ¹¹'The very dust of your city which clings to us we wipe off against you. Nevertheless, know this, that the kingdom of God has come near you.' ¹²But I say to you that it will be more tolerable in that Day for Sodom than for that city. (Luke 10:1-12)

As Jesus and His disciples moved closer to Jerusalem, He knew that His time on the earth was drawing to a close, that soon, He would be betrayed into the hands of evil men and then be crucified. And he knew that as the time of His departure was drawing nearer, He would need to begin to pass the responsibilities of preaching the gospel and of carrying forward the "Kingdom of God" on to His disciples.

That was really His intention from the very beginning, to come and walk among men, to show them the very face and nature of God the Father, then to die on the cross, redeeming men's souls and reconciling them to His Father.

Jesus knew well that His divine work of redemption through His death on the cross was not intended to end there with the cross. From eternity past, the cross was only intended to be the beginning. His plan and His work would need to be carried forward into all future generations, "bringing many sons to glory".

But to do that, other people would need to pick up the banner and carry it forward, others like the disciples, first the twelve, then these seventy, and then many, many more, even to including you and me now.

And that becomes our calling, yours and mine. As we receive Christ as our Savior, we are to immediately join in with Him in His plans and His purposes. We become His "ambassadors", reconciling lost souls to Him.

Listen to these words in 2 Corinthians 5.

¹⁸Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. ²⁰Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. ²¹For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:18-21)

This is the plan of God, to reconcile sinful men and women, you and me, and all the other people of this earth unto Himself, first through the death of Christ on the cross, and then through you and me going out as ambassadors, pleading with men and women to be reconciled to God.

And that was the plan that we see unfolding here as Jesus sent forth these seventy disciples. They were to go out ahead of Him into the towns and villages and do as John the Baptist did, they were to "prepare ye the way of the Lord".

And note these words carefully. This message being carried by the disciples was never intended to have its own power or strength or effectiveness. Their

message was ever and always intended to be as a precursor to the advent of Jesus. They were to give forth His truth to the people to prepare the way for His coming to them. Listen to verse 1,

1After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. (Luke 10:1)

Their work and their message then, and your and my work and message now must never be intended for any other purpose except to go out ahead of Jesus and to prepare the way for His coming to people to personally minister to their souls.

The disciples were to give the people words of reconciliation that would prepare their hearts to receive Jesus when He visited with them.

But what were those “words of reconciliation” that those disciples were to give to the people back then, and what are those words that you and I are to give now? How does a person “prepare ye the way of the Lord?”

The words of John the Baptist are our guide. His message to the people was that they were wretched sinners, in need of a Savior. And that they could not save themselves, that they could not of themselves atone for their sins. They would need a special Savior to do that for them. And that Savior is Jesus Christ alone. And they would need to repent of their sins, turn and receive Christ as their Savior and Lord.

That is the point of reconciliation folks. “Sin” is the one thing that separates us from a relationship with God. And you and I truly are sinners, desperate sinners, lost and blind and in need of someone pure and holy to stand in our place, to atone for our wretched sins, else we personally will surely have to pay our own debt, and we cannot do that except to spend an eternity in hell.

But what does it mean to be “reconciled”? My best understanding comes from my years as a banker. A customer would suddenly find their bank account overdrawn with checks being returned for “non-sufficient funds”. Their creditors were upset. Their reputation was being ruined and big charges were being levied against their account. And they would hurry to the bank to find out what was causing the disaster.

And as is with each of us, we always first believe that we are the one who is right on a matter, and so would our customers. They just knew that the bank had made a gross error, and they would demand that we fix our error.

And yes, on occasion, our bank would have made an error, but almost without fail, the error would be with the customer, an addition or subtraction error in their checkbook, or some other forgetful kind of mistake.

Once the customer was convinced that the error was theirs, we could then begin to sort out the right solutions to solve their dilemma. But unfortunately, there is always a consequence for the errors that are made. With the bank customer, yes there were bank fees for handling the returned checks. And yes, their reputations were damaged. And in a small town, that can be more difficult than we want it to be.

But of more concern than all those consequences, is the fact that the account is still severely lacking in the funds it needs to pay all of the checks that are outstanding against it.

That sudden realization is often the first real step of "reconciliation", to know that you have a debt that you have no means of repaying, and to begin to take serious account of your circumstances.

With the bank customer, it is a matter of first finding a right source for the monies to get the immediate problem resolved. But then it is probably prudent to look deeper and see if there are other causes of the debt problems. Perhaps a much more disciplined manner of lifestyle will also need to be adopted.

And all of that is so with you and me in our own problems of the debts of sin that we have built up between God and ourselves. Yes, we do have immediate pressing problems of sin, and that sin must be dealt with immediately. But also, we probably have an ongoing lifestyle of sin, one that we don't easily recognize, but is there, nonetheless.

Thankfully, God is in the business of complete reconciliation, of restoring sinful and even reprobate lives back into a right relationship with himself. And He has begun that work in the death of Christ on the cross. Those words again from 2 Corinthians 5,

¹⁹that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them. (2 Corinthians 5:19)

Jesus has accomplished the first and most essential part of the reconciliation, and He wants to complete His work in us, to live within us and to help us to make serious changes in our lifestyle and habits.

But even beyond that, He wants us to step forward and to join Him in all the things He is doing in other people's lives. Those words again from 2 Corinthians 5,

¹⁸Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. ²⁰Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. ²¹For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:18-21)

You and I can never do the first part, the saving of men's souls. That work resides in the hands of Christ and Christ alone. Our work, the part of the reconciliation that is assigned to us is very often divided into two opportunities, just before Christ comes to a person and then immediately thereafter.

These seventy disciples were sent out ahead of Jesus to prepare the way for Him to minister His salvation to them. We are to do that also, but then immediately after they are saved, we are to help complete their reconciliation by "discipling" them in the word and the ways of Christ.

Folks, this is who you and I are supposed to be. We are no longer to be the self-focused, self-centered, self-seeking people that we were in the days before we ourselves were reconciled to Christ. The moment we were saved and reconciled to Christ, everything changed.

Listen to these words from 2 Corinthians 5. These are the words that lead into the words that I read to you a moment ago. And note these words carefully. Everything really does change the moment we are saved. Verse 17 of 2 Corinthians 5,

¹⁷Therefore if any man be in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Folks, these are some of the most profound words in all of scripture. Most of us don't realize the real and dangerous condition we live within each day when we are without Christ and without His salvation. We might not say the words out loud, but we are actually "hostile" towards God. We are enemies with Him. Listen to these words, first in Romans chapter 8 verse 7 . . .

⁷ For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸ Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. (Romans 8:7-8)

And then in Romans chapter 5, beginning in verse 10,

¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. ¹¹ More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. (Romans 5:8-11)

Before we received Christ as our Savior and Lord, we really were hostile to God. We were filled with the ways and the behaviors of the world and the flesh, self-centered, self-absorbed, self-gratifying, pleasing ourselves, but never pleasing to God.

But for some reason, known only to Him, God chose us and drew us out of our wretched broken condition, saved us and reconciled us to Himself through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus.

And through His blessed reconciliation, we became a whole new creature.

So, if you are saved right now, you are no longer the same person you were before you were saved and you must not, you dare not continue in your old ways. You have been reconciled to God.

As in the analogy of the bank customer that we gave a moment ago, you must not, you dare not "keep writing those bad checks" that keep on bouncing and ruining your life and your reputation. All of that lifestyle and behavior is in the past. You are now a new creature. The old has passed away and now all things have become new. Those words again in 2 Corinthians 5:17,

¹⁷Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

And again, what are we supposed to do as a "new creature". We are supposed to do as these verses here in 2 Corinthians 5 tell us to do.

¹⁸Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

²⁰Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. ²¹For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:18-21)

Those seventy disciples were sent out ahead of Jesus into the harvest field. In another place in these scriptures Jesus tells us that the fields are "white for harvest". In other words, as those seventy disciples went out, and as you and I go out, we are not the first to go out. God has sent forth His Holy Spirit into the hearts of men and women to prepare them to hear our message of reconciliation.

And the Holy Spirit is also in us and in the words of reconciliation that we will say to those people. And the Holy Spirit will make their souls "white for the harvest", mature and ready to receive the words of Christ that will begin each of their personal moments of reconciliation.

And very importantly, those seventy, and you and I, are not to be concerned about the responses that we will initially receive as we carry forward the message of the gospel. We are just to give it and then let God's Holy Spirit do the rest.

May I say that another way. Some people who hear the message will accept it, but others will refuse it. But that is not to be of our concern. That is a personal interaction between those people and the Holy Spirit of God and we must leave that part to God.

One more thought before we close. These seventy men most likely lived in some of those local communities where they were visiting. Their part in this special

mission that Jesus sent them to carry out was to simply to go out ahead of Him and to “prepare ye the way of the Lord”.

But I want to remind us again and again that salvation really is only the first step in a person’s eternal relationship with Christ. More is required.

While some of those seventy men might be sent out again to go even further, even to evangelize other lands, most of those men would probably remain there in those local areas. And that is where the second part of their ministry should take place. They would need to revisit many of those same people that they lead to salvation and they would need to begin to “disciple” them, teaching them about the deeper things of God. And very importantly, they would need to teach those people how to lead even more people to the Lord Jesus for salvation.

Folks, once we have received Christ as our Savior and Lord, our relationship with Him and our service to Him is endless. It will go on into eternity.

I’ll close with the words of Jesus in Matthew 28,

¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

Let’s pray.