

Home Group Leaders Discussion Guide

Luke 10:1-24

(note: discussion questions are at the end)

“At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, ‘I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was Your good pleasure.’” (10:21)

Let’s start with this verse, deep in this week’s text, and try to answer the following: What caused Jesus such joy? And what are “*these things*” that were hidden from the wise and learned but revealed to little children?

It should be noted before we get too far that the sending out of the 70 (or 72) is unique to the Gospel of Luke. But having said that, when Matthew described the sending out of the 12 (see Matthew 10) he did add a lot of extra teaching from Jesus that parallels Luke’s recording of Jesus’ teaching here in Luke 10.

Beyond the fact that the first time Jesus sent His followers out He only sent 12, and this time He sent 70/72, another subtle but significant difference is where He sent them. In Luke 9 we see that they were sent to towns and villages (9:5-6), whereas in Luke 10 they were sent to cities. (While some English translations may still use the word “town” in chapter 10, the Greek word is “polis” which is best understood as “city”.) This helps make sense of phrases like “*the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few*”, and “*I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.*”, and even “*do not greet anyone on the road*”. Cities have higher population density, so they would be far out-numbered. Cities usually have higher crime (though bandits out on deserted/isolated roads were a concern as well). And Jesus didn’t want them getting distracted with the few they might meet along the way, rather He wanted them strategically focusing their efforts in the cities they were going to.

But what was to be their message as they went out to the various cities. “*The Kingdom of God is near you.*” (9:9, 9:11) This should also inform us as we, too, are message-bearers. I wonder if we were to survey the “average Joe” today about what he thinks the main message of Christians is, if he would say anything like, “They’re always talking about the Kingdom of God.”? But there is also a subtle but significant aspect to this message: “*Peace to this house.*” This should be understood as more than simply a customary greeting.

As N.T. Wright put it, “*At the heart of His call was the message of peace. ‘Peace to this house,’ the messengers were to say, looking to see whether there was a ‘child of peace’ there. Jesus’ contemporaries were for the most part not wanting peace—peace with their traditional enemies the Samaritans (about whom one of Jesus’ most famous parables will occupy us later in this chapter), or peace with the feared and hated Romans. They wanted an all-out war that would bring God’s justice swiftly to their aid and get rid of their enemies once and for all...But Jesus’ vision of God’s kingdom was going in the opposite direction...other movements had tried the way of violence, with disastrous results. But His rejection of that way was not based simply*

on pragmatic considerations. It grew directly out of His knowledge and love of Israel's God as the God of generous grace and astonishing, powerful, healing love. This was the God whose life-giving power flowed through Him to heal; this was the God to whose kingdom He was committed."

This may also help us get our heads around the "woes" pronounced upon Korizan, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. Their lack of repentance upon the presence of Jesus, His message, and His miracles left no other alternative than to face stern judgment...judgment that would be worse than that faced by Sodom, Tyre and Sidon. Mentioning these three historical, pagan cities was meant to be provocative. To a Jewish mindset, it would be hard to think of worse places. But then for Jesus to mention that it would be better off at the judgment for those places than for Korizan, Bethsaida, and Capernaum (cities in Galilee)...that was just plain shocking! Why? How were these cities worse than Sodom, Tyre and Sidon (known for their paganism and violence)? According to Jesus, they would have repented if the same opportunity would have presented itself. In other words, they would have listened to Jesus (or His delegated messengers). And what, exactly, were the Galilean cities/people supposed to repent from? By and large, they were rather moral people. What was their great sin? A lack of love for those that God loved. (We could say that it was their rejection of Jesus—which is true—but what specifically did they reject about Jesus? They loved His miracles. It was His teaching of the Kingdom of God...particularly that the Kingdom was for everyone.)

We should probably pause for a moment and let it sink in how much the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world differ when it comes to use of power. This world operates on the premise that "might makes right", and that the way to accomplish anything is through power, including force, violence, even death if necessary. Jesus went about preaching the Kingdom of God, and expanding the Kingdom of God by the power of love. Worst case scenario...turn the other cheek, wipe the dust off your feet, and walk away...as oppose to courting a violent clash. This is why, as Jesus sent them off, He sent them with nothing...they were powerless, they had to trust, or practice trusting, His way of doing things. The question we ought to ask ourselves is how well have we embraced Jesus' way (namely the way of peace) over the world's way (namely the way of coercion and violence). It all comes down to what kind of power we rely on.

So back to our original question, what caused Jesus joy? I believe the answer is that His followers excitedly discovered, first-hand—because they listened to His instructions—that His way works. As His followers, then or now, embrace the peaceful way of His kingdom, Satan is defeated, and Jesus' Kingdom redemptively transforms the way of the world. And what are "these things" that are hidden from the wise and learned but revealed to little children? Again, the ways and means of the Kingdom of God. An alternative value set, based on alternative power-usage, was beginning to be understood by these early followers. What we should analyze is whether we've continued along that vein or have we slipped back into a more worldly value/power system? (Church history would highly suggest the latter unfortunately.)

We can catch a hint of the temptation of power even in Jesus' warning to His followers upon their joyous return, *"do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names*

are written in heaven.” The key word here is “submit”. We have this innate desire to be above others. Jesus cares deeply about our character and doesn’t want His followers to get puffed up in triumph (even triumph over evil), but wants the posture of our heart to always be one of gratitude. Let’s face it, their triumph in this scenario wasn’t them but the authority given to them by Jesus. Any triumphs or victories we experience are, likewise, due to what He has given us...there is no room for gloating...only praising our Father in heaven, which Jesus Himself provides the example for us. Such gloating, in fact, is more reminiscent of the enemy than Jesus...so we need to be careful.

I suspect Jesus desires to give us more and more authority, to delegate more of His authority to us (that was the original intent with our creation in the first place), but we have to prove ourselves to be trustworthy with it. Our track record isn’t so good when it comes to our use of power and authority. We tend to corrupt it. But at the same time, we need it in order to fulfill our God-given purpose of stewarding His creation. So it really can’t be overstated how much we really need to wrestle with this idea of the TYPE of power and authority we are given and in which we wield. Is it peaceful? Does it come from a place of gratitude/thankfulness? Is it humble, other-oriented? Does it sacrificially serve? Or is it about status...being above others? Is it fear-motivated...fear of loss, fear of what others think? Is it self-serving? Will it resort to coercion and violence if necessary? These are important ideas/concepts/values to wrestle with.

- Q. If you were called to be a missionary to an urban center (think large cosmopolitan place or mega-city) where would you want to go and why? From a strategic missiological perspective what is the advantage of reaching cities? (possible icebreaker)**
- Q. When you think of Jesus being joyful...what do you think brings Him joy?**
- Q. As you consider the non-believers in your life (be they family members, friends, neighbors, co-workers, etc.) to what degree do they understand the message of Christians? (What do they think our message is?) What do you think their understanding of the Kingdom of God is? How might you go about offering them an opportunity to hear the message of the Kingdom?**
- Q. Jesus instructed the 70/72 to “travel light”. It can be debated whether such instructions are specifically for them in that situation or whether it’s instructions for us always. But what practical benefits can you see in “living simply”, “traveling light”? Regardless if Jesus’s instructions in this passage were meant for us today, why wouldn’t we want to live with less, be more trusting, particularly considering the benefits just identified?**
- Q. Identify all the things/ways you see that are different between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world.**

- Q. Describe a time when you were opposed or offended. As you mentally and emotionally worked through that situation, can you see how the two different kingdoms you are a part of were waging war in you? How so?**
- Q. Satan is defeated every time we follow the way of Jesus instead of his way. With that in mind, what might be some everyday opportunities you/we have to defeat our enemy?**
- Q. Identify some ways you see power/authority being used in worldly ways. Describe some ways you see power/authority being used in Kingdom/Godly ways.**
- Q. What are some practical ways we can be advocates for peace, peace-bearers, in our daily lives, both individually/personally and communally/corporately?**
- Q. Are there any “people of peace” in your life? (People of peace can be understood as people who are open to us and advantageous to us for our mission.)**
- Q. When you think of being a Christian and being part of a church, do you understand that to mean that we are people on a mission together...that we are workers in God’s harvest field? Explain. Do you/we pray regularly for more workers? (Something to keep in mind: the resources for the harvest are in the harvest.)**