



Commissioned for Power *(Learning on the job)*

(Luke 10: 1-20)

Imagine that today that all of us have just joined the army, with a view to joining the Parachute Brigade, say 1 Para in due course. So having received a rail warrant here we are at 'Camp Meadgate'. Tomorrow, we will all go to the stores and be issued with our cammo gear and normal uniform kit etc... At this point we will be in soldiers in the British Army. But we will be useless as soldiers.

So we will need to receive training before we are of any use as soldiers. Now we think of training such as going to school. At school we mostly sit in desks and a teacher at the front speaks to us. Even at college a lecturer will speak as the students sit in their seats. I have heard somebody say that 'a lecture is the quickest way to get the information on to the students notebook without engaging their brains'. Even here in church we are used to listening to speakers, like this morning, talking to us.

But this is not the main way that one will learn in the army. If we joined today, by Tuesday morning we would all be out on a large open area of ground. There we would march up and down. We would learn to come smartly and together to the halt. We would learn to stand at attention and at ease. We would learn to salute. And a man or maybe even a woman with 3 stripes on their arm would tell us exactly how they thought we were doing or not, as the case might be!

Then we would be introduced to our personal weapon the rifle. But we wouldn't sit in a class room while somebody explained it to us. Oh no, we would assemble in a large room and very quickly under instruction be taking it to bits and re-assembling it. We would be taught to load it, using dummy ammunition. And only then would we go to an outside range and learn to fire it.

So virtually all our training would be 'hands on'. We would learn by actually doing the things. As we come to look at Jesus sending out the 70+ followers, bear in mind this approach of learning by doing, or learning on the job.

I would like to play a very brief clip from one of my favourite films, 'A Bridge too Far'. This is towards the end of the second world war, when Montgomery had a brain storm in an operation called Market Garden or many know it as the battle for Arnhem. The idea was for paratroopers to capture the bridges from the Belgium border up to the bridge at Arnhem. The 30th armoured corps with their tanks and mobile infantry would punch their way up this corridor, then turn east into Germany and the war would be over by Christmas. It didn't work out that way.

The USA 82nd airborne were dropped at Nijmegen to take the bridge over the Maas-Waal Canal. It was decided that they needed to take both ends of the bridge at once. In this clip Major Julian Cook is briefing his men who will have to cross the river in the boats being provided by the British.



<Clip from 'A Bridge too Far'>
<Pray>

As we look at this passage where Jesus sends out the 72 followers there are four points that I want us to look at.

The first point I have put under the heading of *Sent Out*.

For we read in verse 1: *After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.*¹

And then in verse 3: *Go! I am sending you out*

So they were very much preparing the way for Jesus. They would be declaring the same message that Jesus would be bringing, but they were going ahead of Jesus. Isn't this what we are called to do, to prepare the way for Jesus to come into people's hearts. We will look at the message they took out later. I wonder how we would feel if we had been in their position. Now, I know there are a few people who like challenges and like adventure. But I am not particularly adventurous. I like to know what I am doing and feel confident that I can do it. It is true that these disciples had seen Jesus preach the good news and heal the sick. But as far as I know they hadn't had much personal instruction on these matters from Jesus. Now he sends them out and tells them to go and do it. Very much as case of learning on the job.

When he sends them out he says, *Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.* That is not very encouraging as you go out to be told that you are going to be like lambs amongst wolves. A bit like the sequence in the film where Major Cook says we do know the river is wide and the current is strong. You might think Jesus would have said it would be easy. But good leadership usually tells it the way it is, and prepares their followers for what is to come.

But Jesus then says to them: *The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.*²

So it is the Lord that sends out people to declare and demonstrate the good news of the Kingdom. If he sends them out then he will provide the strength and power they need to do the job.

We read in John's gospel that Jesus said to his disciples:

*As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.*³ So just as the Father sends Jesus so we are being sent in the same way: Jesus then follow this by breathing on them and saying: *Receive the Holy Spirit.*⁴ And just before Pentecost Jesus said: *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you.*⁵

¹ Luke 10:1

² Luke 10:2

³ John 20:21

⁴ John 20:22

⁵ Acts 1:8



So when Jesus sent them out, they went out with the power of the Holy Spirit. So to when he sends us out, we go in the strength he provides. We go in the power of the Holy Spirit. At the end of the Matthew's gospel we that Jesus said to his followers: *All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,*⁶ So we are clearly sent out by Jesus, just as much as the 72 in this passage. But Jesus follows this by saying: *And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*⁷ So as we are sent out by Jesus we go in the power of the Holy Spirit and with the presence of Jesus with us all the time.

The second thing we see from this passage I have put under the heading **Travel Light**.

Jesus says: *Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.*⁸

Purse as it implies was a money bag, so Jesus is saying you will not need any money as you go ahead of me. And he says a little later: *Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.*⁹ So they will not need money as their meals will be provided by the houses they stay in. The bag, in NT Greek *pera*, is the travellers bag and our modern equivalent would be a knapsack. In this would be any food for the journey or other requirements. But again Jesus says they are not to take this with them. Again food as we have seen will be provided by the houses they stay in.

When it says take no sandals, one might think that Jesus was suggesting they go barefoot on their travels. This would not be a good idea. Apparently in those days when you went on a journey it was customary to take a spare pair of shoes or sandals. Again Jesus is effectively saying, 'travel light' you don't need a spare of shoes on this journey.

The final injunction to not greet anyone on the road sounds like a command to be rude and ignore people. However, in those days Eastern greetings were very elaborate and very time consuming. As part of travelling light, Jesus is also I believe saying don't be distracted. Their main task was to tell people the good news and heal the sick. They were not to be side tracked by entering long social conversations, even that was the norm. This is probably the same reason that he says, **do not move around from house to house**. If they did this they could get caught up in a round of social calls, rather than concentrating on the business to preach the good news.

I believe that Jesus would say to us today, that we need to travel light as we go around telling people the good news of Jesus. One of the areas that we can easily not travel light is in the area of training. It is so easy to think that we need loads of training before we can share the good news of Jesus with.

⁶ Matthew 28:18 &19

⁷ Matthew 28:20

⁸ Luke 10:4

⁹ Luke 10:7



In the series 'Walk across the room' one of the main themes was that we need to make friendships for friendship sake. And Bill Hybels said that in such friendships, one will usually find natural opportunities where we can share our faith. We don't need therefore large amounts of training before we can as it were be sent out by Jesus to share the good news or even pray for the sick. Learning like the disciples 'on the job' is often the best way.

Let me say that I am not saying that training is not valuable and useful. Sally has been organising training this year, mainly on Sunday afternoons. This can be a valuable aid to our work for God. But we sometimes we can feel that we need loads of training before we can go out and do the Lord's work.

The other thing we learn under this heading is not to get distracted. There are many things that might distract us from sharing our faith. And I believe Jesus would say, that many of these things are ok, but don't let them distract us from sharing our faith and advancing his kingdom.

The third area to look at briefly is '**The Message**'

It would be interesting to know exactly what the message is that they shared and what we would share with people. In verse 9 Jesus says to them: *'Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you.'* So we don't have much in this section to go on. He also said *He who listens to you listens to me;* When people listened to the disciples then they were effectively listening to Jesus. So too with us, we when we tell people about Jesus we are speaking for him today.

But if we look in the gospels we find that the main thing that Jesus spoke on was 'the Kingdom of God' or the 'Kingdom of heaven' which are the same thing. One of the emphasis of Jesus kingdom was the immediacy of this good news. He didn't often talk of eternal life or even about going to heaven. Rather salvation had come to people there and then, and they would experience the benefit of the good news straight away, including healing and deliverance. After all Jesus said: *I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*¹⁰ This must refer to us having life in all its fullness in this life not just in the next.

It is also important to remember that the root word for salvation in the New Testament also includes more than just being saved from sin and gaining eternal life. Roger Sapp in his book on healing and miracles writes:

*The Greek word translated saved means much more than just going to Heaven. It means and is sometimes translated as healed, cured delivered, set free, made whole, preserved, and a host of other related things. In other words, Salvation is for the here and now, as well as for eternity, and includes God's provision for all human needs.*¹¹

¹⁰ John 10:10

¹¹ Performing Miracles & Healing by Roger Sapp - ISBN0-9662085-5-2



So the good news of salvation also covers healing and deliverance. That's why when Jesus sends them out, he links the good news of the kingdom with healing, for as we have seen he said: *'Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The Kingdom of God is near you.'*

As we tell people the good news we should be seeing people being healed and set free. This is the good news of the Gospel that is immediate and relevant to people today.

(What happened!)

But before we look at the final point, lets see what happened when they went out to preach the good news and heal the sick. For we read in the passage: *The seventy-two returned with joy and said, Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.*¹²

It says that they returned with joy. I think that they were pretty excited. The word for joy also has the sense of rejoice in it. So they were rejoicing and very excited.

When they went out, I believe their commission was to preach the good news and heal the sick as Jesus said. I don't think that they went out specifically to cast out demons. Yet as they went they found that demons were fleeing from people as they proclaimed the good news of Jesus. I'm sure if we had been one of the 72 we would have been pretty excited too.

I believe that even Jesus was excited and rejoicing. The text merely says: *I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.* But I can just hear his voice getting excited that as the son of God he was beginning to see Satan's power and authority crumbling at the proclamation of his gospel of good news.

So we have seen that **Jesus Sent them Out**, told them to **Travel Light** and gave them **the message** of the Kingdom and healing to share. The results were amazing but at the end Jesus effectively says is **Stay Humble**.

For he says: *However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.*¹³

Some places have it as written in the heavens and we also know that in another place it talks about our names are written in the lambs book of life.

Jesus says don't get too excited that the demons flee from you. Rather rejoice that your names are written in my book of life. He is saying you belong to me and I belong to you, now and for evermore. That should be the focus of your rejoicing and joy. We need to focus on Jesus and the life he has given us, and not to get too puffed up with what is happening.

¹² Luke 10:17

¹³ Luke 10:20



It is ok to get excited when we see God at work. But one of the dangers is that we can start to take our focus of what God is doing and start to look at our part. It is all too easy to start to speak as if we are saving people, we are healing people and so on. But it is the Lord, particularly the Holy Spirit that does all these things. He should be the one that gets the glory. If we start to take the glory on to ourselves it is not a good thing to do and can effect our walk with the Lord and our ministry for him.

Many years ago quite a few of the well know Television evangelists in USA fell away badly and did things that they shouldn't do. I wonder whether it was because they took their eyes of Jesus and became puffed up with their own importance and work. They should have remembered what Jesus said to his disciples when they were seeing amazing things happening and stayed humble.

So too Jesus reminds us to stay humble. Peter in his letter gives us this as wise advice for he writes: *God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.*¹⁴

So let us above all Stay Humble and focussed on Jesus.

So we have seen that Jesus would send us out to declare the good news and to stay light as we do it. At the end of the communion service in the Anglican church often these words are spoken and they sum up quite well this passage:

The minister says: **Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.**
And the congregation say: **In the name of Christ. Amen.**

¹⁴ | Peter 5:5 & 6