

FINDING THE LOST SHEEP

(Luke 10:1-7)

Luke 10:1-7 After 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. 2 Then 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. 3 Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves. 4 Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals; and greet no one along the road. 5 **But whatever house** you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ 6 And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on it; if not, it will return to you. 7 And 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.

Today is the first Sunday of March. Normally I begin my messages with a story, but today, I think a short review of what we’ve learned the first two months of this year is in order. On the very first Sunday of this year, I spoke about **Jesus’s cursing of the fig tree.**

Just a few days before Jesus was crucified, He was on His way back to the city of Jerusalem and the Bible tells us that He was hungry. He saw a fig tree but when He got closer, He realized that all this fig tree had on it was leaves---there was not a piece of fruit to be found on it. Then Jesus said to the tree, **“Let no fruit grow on you ever again.”** And by the next day, the tree had withered and died.

Now on the first Sunday of this year, I asked, **“If Jesus came to each one of us, would He find us bearing fruit? Making some kind of a difference in the lives of both saved and unsaved people? Or would He find a barren fruit tree? A tree with a lot of pretty leaves but no fruit?”**

Since the beginning of this year, each Sunday I have shown you from the Scripture that God has provided for each one of us in many different ways in order that we might be fruitful for Him. For instance,

- We’ve learned that **the people around** us are not as interested in knowing what a friend they have in Jesus as in knowing what a friend they have in you and me
- We’ve learned that the Lord has not only appointed each one of us to be fruitful for Him but **has gifted us and** given us unique abilities and talents so we can bring people to Him in our own special way---according to the way He wired us (we don’t have to minister to people the same way)
- We’ve learned that **“Without God, we can’t.** Without us, He won’t.”

- We've learned that **we need to have a passion** for seeing people saved and that prayer to the Lord of the harvest is essential (have you decided who you are going to **focus on bringing to Christ?**)
- We've learned that **relational evangelism** is costly, time-consuming, and—sometimes—even dangerous because we go forth as lambs among wolves.
- Also, we've learned that **we need to lay aside** the many things that weigh us down---good things that keep us from doing the best things in life

In our text in Luke 10, after Jesus has told **the 70 what not** to take with them on the journey, He tells them what to do once they find a house where the people don't slam the door on them immediately:

⁵ But whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house.'⁶ And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on it; if not, it will return to you.

In a nutshell, Jesus is saying, **"You will know right** away if you are in a home where the people are basically friendly and peaceful or not. If you greet them kindly and speak with them, and you get good vibes in return—if they are basically peaceful people—you'll know it. If they're not, you'll know that right away as well.

If they are kind and hospitable people, and they are willing to take you in, verse 7 says:

7 And 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.

Stay with them as long as they will care for you. Be content with their food and shelter and don't go house to house looking for better food and shelter. You will be a blessing to them and their family and they will be a blessing to you.

(This verse reminds me of the couple in the OT who built a room for the Prophet Elisha where he stayed whenever he would pass through that town. Years later, the couple's young son died---and Elisha raised him from the dead. I would say that is a pretty good return on the investment they made years earlier for God).

The people that Jesus sent out were told by the Lord to stay with those who extended peace in return to them. And there is an important principle here for every one of us who want to be fruitful for God and to bring people into His kingdom, and it is this:

1. **To get the greatest return on our investment of time and energy, we must discern whom we can and whom we cannot influence for Christ.**

It is interesting that before Jesus sent out the 12 in Matthew 10, He told them the following:

Matthew 10:11 “Whatever town or village you enter, **search** for some worthy person there and stay at his house until you leave.”

Now, someone might say, “**Bob, are you saying that we should only witness to nice people and neighbors and never speak to strangers or people who are wild?**” Of course not. Sometimes, God may lead someone across our path that may not be the nicest person in the world.

But what I am talking about this morning is **your “Top 10” list**. The Lord deployed the 70 to locate worthy people and worthy homes. This is where evangelism will be much more effective.

The Lord wants us to develop our ability to detect readiness for the gospel.

Illustration If you have **a neighbor or co-worker** who is easy to talk to and receptive, and you **have another neighbor who uses the Lord’s name** in vain every 30 seconds and whose household resembles *Ozzy Osbourne’s*, with what person and family do you think the Lord would have you to start? It goes without saying.

Jesus told us, “**Do not give** what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine...” (Matthew 7:6).

So when you make your “Top 10” list---and you pray over it daily---you will want to start with those whom you feel you will have the greatest possibility of bringing to faith in Christ.

2. Though “swine” are not beyond salvation, it is not wise for Christians to proclaim the Good News to them.

There is a vast difference between those who are **ignorant** of spiritual things and those who are **impure, profane** and **hate** spiritual things.

One is the **Ethiopian eunuch** (who was lost but hungering for God)---the **other is Saul of Tarsus** (who hated Christians). One you can open the Scriptures with---the other, God has to deal with personally to get through to.

If you have neighbors or co-workers like Saul, hateful of Christianity, prayer is in order for that kind of person. It takes a high degree of maturity and biblical knowledge to deal with a person hardened by sin and in full-blown rebellion against God. It would probably be very unwise to expose yourself and your family to people like this. But we can always remember that all people, no matter how bad, need our prayers.

Ok. One more lesson for us this morning. It is found in v. 7:

Luke 10:7 And **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.

The verb **remain** is *menete* and means “to abide, to dwell, or even, to continue.” It is the same word Jesus uses in John 15 when He says, “*Abide in Me...*”

Since we are 2000 years removed from what the Lord commanded the 70, how can we apply this verse in our lives today. I think it goes without saying.

- 3. If God opens a door for you to reach a certain person and his or her family, you will need to “stay” with them---to continue on with them---until the Lord accomplishes His work among them.**

Peter reached Cornelius **and** his household.

Paul and Silas led the Philippian jailer to the Lord **and** his household.

Paul reached the rich businesswoman Lydia **and** her household.

But we need to remember that in most cases, it will take time to bring not only mom and dad, but also the rest of the family to Christ.

(And we'll talk more about this next week.)

Application: Who can you influence for Christ? Who will you “stay” with until they come to Christ (and their family as well)?

Who would that be?

The great Dallas Seminary professor and preacher Howard Hendricks said:

The greatest witness for Jesus Christ that I know anything about in the city of Dallas is not a preacher. **He's an ophthalmologist.** He was in the power structure of an evangelical church for twelve years and never led anybody to Jesus Christ. A group of college kids came along one day and said, "Hey, Doc, are you sharing your faith?"

The doctor said, "No, as a matter of fact, I'm not. I don't even know how to go about it."

They said, "We've got a little training program. How about getting involved in it?"

He said, "Count me in." They taught him how to share his faith.

This guy leads people to Christ as if it's going out of style. [One time], I was way out in a remote section of India, and [told the story of this amazing ophthalmologist], but I didn't use his name (figuring nobody knew Dr. Jack Cooper). When I finished, a doctor came up and said, "You were talking about Jack Cooper weren't you?"

I said, "How did you know?"

He said, "I went to medical school in Dallas. While I was there, I went to see Dr. Cooper about my eyes. He led me to Christ and disciplined me all the way through medical school."

Then Dr. Hendricks said this:

Today that doctor is the only licensed neurosurgeon in that part of India. He has absolutely unbelievable impact for Jesus Christ. He will tell you it started in the office of a Dallas doctor who knew why he was here instead of in heaven.

By the way, Dallas ophthalmologist Jack Cooper went home to be with the Lord last June at the age of 89.