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An Exposition of Our Commission

Luke 10:1-12

At the end of each of the four gospels there is a version of what is called The Great Commission. By definition, it is the act of Jesus sending His followers out into the world. Our text contains an additional commissioning of which only Luke writes. There is some manuscript disagreement on whether the number of sent ones is 70 or 72(v. 1 and 17). The number is probably symbolic. Genesis 10 contains the names of seventy people in the Hebrew text and seventy-two in the Septuagint, the Greek version of the First Testament.

Our walking around inside Luke’s account begins with “The Lord appointed”... Have you ever thought of yourself that way, as the Lord’s appointed? The theme song of the Church of God in Christ, the largest African American Pentecostal denomination in the world, is,

*This is the Church of God in Christ*

*This is the Church of God in Christ*

*You cannot join it*

*You've got to be born in it*

*This is the Church of God in Christ.*

They sang it that way years. Then, the late Bishop Gilbert Earl Patterson offered a version in which the lyrics are,

*This is the Church of God in Christ*

*This is the Church of God in Christ*

*We are anointed*

*By God appointed*

*This is the Church of God in Christ.*

Do we see ourselves as God’s anointed? God’s appointed?

Christ sent out His anointed, appointed ones, two by two. Why two by two? For security? Support? Accountability?

They were an advance team.

**Illus.**

When Evangelist Billy Graham died, in 2018, a local newspaper in Marietta GA interviewed a then-ninety-year-old man named Henry Holley. We don’t know that name. He was not famous, but for 48 years Henry Holley was an advance man for Billy Graham. Holley would go to a city in which Graham was going to hold a stadium event. A year ahead, Holley would go and prepare the way.

That’s the function of this commissioning in our text. These 70 or 72 are going to places Jesus intends to go.

Their being sent out was a practical response to a staffing/personnel problem. What shall we do? Pray!!

These who travel are being sent as lambs among wolves: the vulnerable among the predatory.

The anointed, appointed seventy are to travel lightly. Same instruction was given when the twelve were sent out, in 9:3. That’s a good piece of advice for travelers in the name of Jesus *today.* Some of our baggage, literal and figurative, is weighing us down, holding us back, impeding the Church’s progress. Whatever it is that we’re trying to do, might get done better if we were not so bogged down.

In that culture, in which the anointed, appointed did ministry, greetings could be long and elaborate. I am reminded of the complex handshake/greeting we urban African Americans used to give each other in the 1970s and 1980s. It was exhausting. An almost-secret handshake, a hug, an exchange of phrases. I wonder if these sent ones were at least given freedom to give The Nod.

**Illus.**

From the Urban Dictionary:

"The Nod" is an act of recognition and respect that is accomplished by raising and lowering your head ([nodding](https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=nodding)) when you see an [acquaintance](https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=acquaintance) in a public place and you want to [show respect](https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=show%20respect) for their presence.

When you enter a house, use a standard greeting protocol: “Peace to this house”. Cf. Deuteronomy 20:10-12

***10****“When you go near a city to fight against it, then proclaim an offer of peace to it.* ***11****And it shall be that if they accept your offer of peace, and open to you, then all the people who are found in it shall be placed under tribute to you and serve you.* ***12****Now if the city will not make peace with you, but war against you, then you shall besiege it.*

You 70 or 72 followers of Jesus might find yourselves in Gentile territory. You are to place declaration over dish and mission over meal. You are to remember your commission. Last week Representative Elijah Cummings, of Baltimore, died. It matters not to me, what you thought of the congressman. We all must admire the way he went to Washington and never forgot the people of Maryland’s 7th congressional district who sent him there. This text has 70 or 72 people going out in the name of Jesus. They are never to forget who sent them. Jesus’ commission has specificity in it. They are not told to go out and help elderly people cross the road. They are told to go out and proclaim.

**Illus.**

Humorist Garrison Keillor ends each The Writer’s Almanac podcast with the words, “Be well, do good work, and keep in touch”. Pithy. Memorable. Jesus gives his followers something brief to say, but much more powerful.

The content of their proclamation is scripted. Jesus tells them what to say...and do. Some would say that the gifts operant in the first century are not *needed* or even *available* to the Church today. Cessationists would say, no individual has the gift of healing today. Our commission, they would say, is to proclaim the kingdom of God and leave the healing to God!

Our commission: to proclaim the good news of the coming of Christ and His sphere, His kingdom, and to proclaim the healing that is available from this same Jesus.

We are to do work in partnership with other believers, always seeing ourselves as part of something greater *than* ourselves. Two by two. Fifty by fifty, but never one by one. We are the people of God. We bring peace to a house where there is discord. We announce good news to a city that has heard nothing but bad news for a long time. We bring God’s healing to places where disease and sickness of every kind seem to reign. We go places where there is tainted, lead-laden water and we proclaim the Living Water AND call on the Water Authority to do its job. We go to places where there are food deserts and we proclaim the Bread of Life AND work with neighborhood organizations and supermarket chains to bring in fresh produce and staple pantry items at a reasonable cost. Note that the commission is marked by both articulation and activity; proclamation and practice.

What if it doesn't go well????

If the social interaction does not go well...

Note that the proclamation is the same whether the disciples are well-received or not (The kingdom of God has come near you [9, 11]).

There seems to be little expectation of acceptance and buy in and capitulation from cities like Sodom. However, Chorazin and Bethsaida and Capernaum were near Jesus’ early ministry sites on the north end of the Sea of Galilee. Those cities had heard the gospel, had seen miracles, had seen the transformative power of the carpenter-turned-teacher. Woe to the cities, and to us, who see Jesus, hear Jesus, see Jesus’ life-changing, healing activity in the earth and fail to follow Him!!! These disciples are to proclaim proximity. The sphere in which God reveals God is here!

Let’s go tell that. Let’s go live that.

Amen