

[Lk 10:1-12, 17-20 or 10:1-9](#)

Gospel

At that time the Lord appointed seventy-two others whom he sent ahead of him in pairs to every town and place he intended to visit. He said to them, "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest. Go on your way; behold, I am sending you like lambs among wolves. Carry no money bag, no sack, no sandals; and greet no one along the way. Into whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this household.' If a peaceful person lives there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. Stay in the same house and eat and drink what is offered to you, for the laborer deserves his payment. Do not move about from one house to another. Whatever town you enter and they welcome you, eat what is set before you, cure the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God is at hand for you.' Whatever town you enter and they do not receive you, go out into the streets and say, 'The dust of your town that clings to our feet, even that we shake off against you.' Yet know this: the kingdom of God is at hand. I tell you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom on that day than for that town."

The seventy-two returned rejoicing, and said, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us because of your name." Jesus said, "I have observed Satan fall like lightning from the sky. Behold, I have given you the power to 'tread upon serpents' and scorpions and upon the full force of the enemy and nothing will harm you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice because the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice because your names are written in heaven."

or

At that time the Lord appointed seventy-two others whom he sent ahead of him in pairs to every town and place he intended to visit. He said to them, "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest.

Go on your way;
 behold, I am sending you like lambs among wolves.
 Carry no money bag, no sack, no sandals;
 and greet no one along the way.
 Into whatever house you enter, first say,
 'Peace to this household.'
 If a peaceful person lives there,
 your peace will rest on him;
 but if not, it will return to you.
 Stay in the same house and eat and drink what is offered to you,
 for the laborer deserves his payment.
 Do not move about from one house to another.
 Whatever town you enter and they welcome you,
 eat what is set before you,
 cure the sick in it and say to them,
 "The kingdom of God is at hand for you."

Jerome Biblical Commentary

(c) MISSION OF THE SEVENTY-TWO DISCIPLES (10:1-12). See Mt 9:37f.; 10:7-16. Lk presents two missions: one of the Twelve, relying upon Mk (Lk 9:1-6; Mk 6:7-13); and one of the seventy-two, details of which are drawn from Q. The instructions in both chapters are similar, at times even identical. The seventy-two are mentioned only here in the [NT](#), and significantly Jesus applies the words of 10:4 to the Twelve at the Last Supper (23:35-36). What Jesus said in commissioning the Twelve was later applied in the early Church to larger missionary bands; and so Lk records it. **1.** *seventy-two*: This number is read in [mss.](#) P75, P45, B, and D; but "seventy" is the number found in other mss., among them S, A, C, and W. The evidence for the two numbers is about equal (see B. M. Metzger, [NTS](#) 5 [1958-59]- 299-306). Commentators often detect a symbolical meaning in either number, seeing connections between the "70 disciple" and the 70 nations in the table of Gn 10, the 70 elders who assisted Moses (Ex 18:21; 24:1; Nm 11:16), or the name by which the common [Gk](#) translation of the [OT](#) is known, the Septuagint-or again, between the "72 disciples" and the 72 nations of the table of Gn 10 (according to the [LXX](#)), the 72 translators of the LXX (according to [Aristeas](#) 50:307), or the multiple 6 times 12 (the number of the Israelite tribes). But all of this is fanciful (see S. Jellicoe, [NTS](#) 6 [1959-60] 319-21). **2.** *the harvest is abundant*: See Mt 9:37-38, where the saying occurs just before the call of the Twelve. **3.** *like lambs among wolves*: The image shifts from reapers to animals, and the contrast between the lambs and the wolves suggests the hostility that marks the "journey" to be made by Jesus himself. **4.** *do not carry a purse*: See 9:3. The instruction suggests the urgency of the situation that will face the disciples; not even ordinary greetings should deter them (see 2 Kgs 4:29). **5.** *peace be to this house*: This is the peace that the Lucan Gospel associates with the salvation being brought by Christ (cf. 1:79; 2:14, 29; 7:50; 8:48; 12:51; 19:38). See [ThDNT](#), 1, 400-17. *son of peace*: What is implied here is that peace has the power of begetting tranquillity in others. **7.** *the laborer deserves his wages*: This saying is quoted in 1 Tm 5:18 as "Scripture" (cf. 1 Cor 9:7, 1 Cor 9:14). **8.** *eat what is set before you*: Dietary laws have no force any more (cf. 1 Cor 10:27; Acts 10:25). **9.** *the Kingdom of God has come near to you*: It was brought near in the coming of Jesus, and now it would be brought even nearer in the mission of the disciples who extend his activity. **11.** *the dust of your town*: See comment on 9:5. **12.** *Sodom*: See Gn 19. Sodom did not have the opportunity for repentance that is being offered to these towns.

99 (d) THE IMPENITENT TOWNS (10:13-16). See Mt 11:21-23; 10:40. **13.** *Chorazin*: A village in the hill

country, about 3 mi. NNW of Capernaum; modern Kerazeh. We know nothing of Jesus' own ministry in this village. *Bethsaida*: See comment on 9:10. What Jesus did in these two places would have been regarded as tantamount to a summons to repentance in the wicked towns of Tyre and Sidon, the classic examples of heathenism.**15. Capernaum**: The town that is confident in its lofty reputation and character will be brought to the lowest status because it has not responded to the offer extended to it in the mission of Jesus.

100 (e) **THE RETURN OF THE SEVENTY-TWO (10:17-20)**. These verses, modeled on 9:10 (Mk 6:30 [par.](#)), give the Evangelist an opportunity to record words of Jesus apropos of the proper attitude of a disciple.**17. subject to us in your name**: The Twelve had been promised the power of exorcism (9:1). The report gave indication that Jesus' mission was having an effect in the world of evil (see 9:49-50; Acts 19:13).**18. I saw Satan fall like lightning**: Satan ("the adversary") is found at times in the OT in the throne room of Yahweh arguing like a prosecuting attorney against the true welfare of God's people (Jb 2:1ff.; Zech 3:1ff.); cf. Ap 12:9; 20:1-3. The fall of Satan (cf. Is 14:12) is a symbolic way of telling the disciples of the effect of their mission.**19. I have given you authority**: The gift has permanent value, for the pf. tense, of the verb stresses that Jesus has already conquered Satan in principle; the effects of his victory will be realized in the Church (cf. ...Ps 91:13; Acts 28:6).**20. that your names are written in heaven**: Luke is counteracting the danger in the Church of overemphasizing external wonders (1 Cor 12). On the books of heaven, see [Str-B 2](#), 169-76.

101 (f) **JESUS' HYMN OF PRAISE (10:21-22)**. Except for the introductory words, this section is almost identical with Mt 11:25-27 (→ Gospel Mt, 43:77). The verses may be a hymn of the early Church, so well known as to be quoted verbatim by both Mt and Lk. Luke opens the text in a characteristic way: He alone mentions the rejoicing of Jesus in the Spirit. See A. Feuillet, "Jésus et la sagesse divine d'après les Évangiles synoptiques," [RB](#) 62 (1955) 161-96.(g) **THE PRIVILEGES OF THE DISCIPLES (10:23-24)**. See Mt 13:16-17. **23. blessed are you**: An isolated beatitude (cf. 6:20).**24. prophets and kings**: Such figures of the Old Dispensation lived in hope; but the disciples of Jesus now enjoy a rare privilege of fulfillment witnessed.

102 (h) **THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN (10:25-37)**. The theme of discipleship continues with a question put by a lawyer who asks of Jesus how salvation is to be achieved. Jesus' answer indicates what should be the conduct of the real disciple; it is the conduct of the wise and the prudent (not just of those learned in the Law) and of the little ones; recall 10:21-22. **25-28**. In the opening scene Luke depends on Mk 12:28-34, because he will omit this story later (at 20:40). The spokesman is a pharisee in Mt, a scribe in Mk, and a lawyer in Lk. In Mk and Mt he inquires about the great commandment in the Law, but in Lk, where the Gentile-Christian audience is not overly concerned about the Law, he asks about "eternal life."**26**. Because Luke has changed the opening setting Jesus' answer makes little sense; it has to be understood in the background of the Marcan context.**27. you shall love the Lord...:** The answer here combines Dt 6:4 and Lv 19:18, as they are combined in the [T. Issachar](#) (5:2; 7:5).**28**. Jesus' comment is reminiscent of Lv 18:5 (cf. Gal 3:12; Rom 10:5).**29. who is my neighbor**: The lawyer would have the "neighbor" of the commandment further defined so that he would be sure of eternal life. Jesus' answer in the parable involves an extreme example: He compares the failure of the ministers of God with the unselfishness of the hated Samaritan, and his hearers would then be able to measure the unlimited nature of the duty of love (so J. Jeremias, *Parables*, 204).**30. going down from Jerusalem to Jericho**: The verb is expressive of the great descent involved in the journey; Jerusalem is roughly 2500 ft. above sea level and Jericho is roughly 800 ft. below sea level. *robbers*: The Gk word (1 st s) is the same that is used of Barabbas (Jn 18:40) and of the "bandits" crucified with Jesus (Mk 15:27).**31. a priest**: A representative of the religious leaders of the people.**32. a Levite**: An assistant in the Temple. Were the two of them afraid to approach the man because they thought he was dead and consequently a source of ritual defilement?**33. a Samaritan**: One of those with whom Jews normally did not deal (Jn

4:9). In the course of the parable, he who possesses the secret of eternal life turns out to be this stranger without the lawyer's learning and concern for security and without the dignity and status of the priestly and Levitical condition. *moved with compassion*: His love was spontaneous and did not have to inquire into the Law; it was disinterested, kindly, personal, and effective.**37. the one who showed mercy on him**: The definition of a neighbor. The lawyer cannot bring himself to mention the name "Samaritan."

(Cerfaux, L., *Recueil*, 2, 51-59. Daniélou, J., *Mélanges bibliques* [*Fest.* A. Robert; Paris, 1957] 457-65. Derrett, J. D. M., *NTS* 11 [1964] 22-37. Spicq, C., *Agape in the NT* [St. Louis, 1963] 1, 108-18.)

103 (i) MARTHA AND MARY (10:38-42). A chiasmic structure (a-b b-a) connects this episode with the preceding one: (a) the word of God about charity; (b) the story of the Samaritan; (b) the story of Martha's neighborly concern; (a) the logion about the love for God. The parable of the good Samaritan stressed practical, effective helpfulness, and Luke now uses another story to point up the primary necessity of faith in the Christian. **38. a woman named Martha**: Her name means "lady," being the fem. form of *m rêh*, "lord."**39. a sister called Mar**: Not to be confused with Mary of Magdala. The description of Martha's and Mary's character in Lk harmonizes with that given in Jn (11:1ff.; 12:1-11). *on their way*: The reference to a journey in connection with this episode is entirely stylistic; from Luke's point of view Jesus is nowhere near Bethany, the hometown of the sisters.**40. much serving**: Jesus probably brought several guests with him.**42. there is need of one thing [only]**: Here the *ms.* tradition is not sound: (1) "Only a few things are needed, indeed only one" (mss. Pa, S, B); (2) "only a few things are needed" (ancient versions); (3) "there is need of one thing [only]" (mss. P⁷⁵, A, C, W, *Vg*, *Pesh*). The latter reading is usually preferred. Whereas (2) seems to indicate that only a few things on the dinner table are needed, (3) makes it a need of something more spiritual and (1) combines the two interpretations. The doctrine behind the words comes close to other Lucan texts (4:4; 8:21; 11:27-28; see A. Baker, *CBQ* 27 [1965] 127-37)

NT New Testament

mss. Manuscripts

NTS *New Testament Studies*

Gk Greek

OT Old Testament

LXX Septuagint (Greek translation of the OT)

Aristeas (*Letter of*) *Aristeas to Philocrates* (→ 68:32-33)

ThDNT G. Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, 1964-). English version of *ThWNT*

par. Parallel passage(s) in the Synoptic Gospels

Str-B H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament* (6 vols.; Munich, 1922-61)

RB *Revue biblique*

T. Issachar *Testament of Issachar*

Fest. *Festschrift* (generic name for any publication honoring a person)

ms. Manuscript

Vg Vulgate (common Latin version of the Bible)

Pesh Peshitta (Syriac) version of the Bible

CBQ *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*

Brown, R. E., Fitzmyer, J. A., & Murphy, R. E. 1968]; Published in electronic form by Logos Research Systems, 1996. *The Jerome Biblical commentary* (electronic ed.). Prentice Hall: Englewood Cliffs, NJ

Ver. 1. *Other seventy-two.* Most Greek copies, and the Syriac version, have seventy, as in the Protestant translation. Yet there seems no doubt but the true number was seventy-two. For seventy-two may be called seventy; but had they been only seventy, they could never have been called seventy-two. This was also the exact number of the judges chosen to assist Moses; (Exodus xxiv. 1.) though called seventy, (Numbers xi. 16.) as it is evident, because there were six chosen out of every one of the twelve tribes. In like manner the exact number of the interpreters called the Septuagint must have been seventy-two; and also the just number of the Sanhedrim. --- *Two and two*, that one might be a help and comfort to the other; as also a witness of the carriage and behaviour of his companion. (Witham)

Ver. 4. As Moses formerly chose twelve elders as princes and fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel, and afterwards gave to each of these elders six others, to assist them in the arduous work of governing the people, so our divine Saviour chose twelve apostles to govern his Church. He likewise afterwards gave six disciples to each apostle, which makes 72, to serve as priests, and assist in governing the Church. (Tirinus) --- *Salute no man*, i.e. go forwards promptly, and do not stay to amuse yourselves with vain compliments and useless civilities towards those whom you meet. This was a proverb. Eliseus said the same to Giezi, when he sent him to restore life to the child of the widow of Sunamis. If any man meet you, salute him not; think of nothing but of executing the orders I give you. (Calmet)

Ver. 15. *And thou, Capharnaum, &c.* Capharnaum is situated on the western coast of the sea of Tiberias. Christ having left Nazareth, made the former city the usual place of his abode. There was no city in which he had preached so much, or wrought so many miracles. On this account, he said it was exalted to the heavens; but for its incredulity he threatens it shall be cast down even unto hell. (Calmet)

Ver. 18. *I saw Satan as lightning, &c.* Many expound it in this manner: I, who am from eternity, saw Satan with all the rebellious angels, as glorious as they were, fall from heaven; fear then, and tremble, though you have received such favours from God. Others take it in this sense, that Christ, by his incarnation, hath seen the power of the devils lessened and confounded, according to what he also said, (John xii. 31.) *Now shall the prince of this world be cast out.* (Witham) --- What connexion have these words with what goes before? Some understand them thus: the reign of the devil is near at an end; this prince of darkness is going to be overturned; he will fall from the air, where he reigns, with the same precipitation as lightning, which cuts the clouds and presently disappears. It is almost the same thing he says in other places. "The prince of this world is already judged; behold now is the judgment of this world; behold now the prince of this world shall be cast forth! When I sent you to preach the gospel to the poor, I saw Satan fall; I saw his empire overturned. The last effort which this empire of darkness shall make is the death of our Saviour, as he himself says: This is your hour, and the power of darkness. Since his resurrection he has bound the dragon in the abyss for a thousand years; he has shut up the entrance, and sealed it with his seal." (Apocalypse xii. 9. and xx. 2.) Others think that Jesus speaks here of the fall of Lucifer, at the beginning of the creation. Wishing to give his disciples a lesson in humility, on account of the vain complacency which he saw they took in the miracles they wrought, he says to them: Beware of pride, that precipitated the first angel from heaven: I have seen him in the glory with which he was surrounded, and I have seen him hurried into the abyss. Fear, lest the same should happen to you. The former explanation appears to us more simple and literal. (Calmet)

Ver. 19. *Given you power, &c.* By these words our Saviour seems to insinuate, that the venom of serpents, and the other noxious qualities of some animals, proceed from the malice of the devil. These are the arms and the instruments he makes use of to kill us, being the prince of death and a murderer from the beginning, as the Scripture styles him. The Jews attributed sickness, poisons, and every thing of the same kind to evil spirits.

Ver. 21. *He rejoiced in the Holy Ghost.* In almost all Greek copies, we read in *spirit*, without *holy*. And

it is expounded of Christ's own spirit. (Witham) --- *I give thanks, &c.* In this verse we see plainly refuted the heretical Marcion, and his follower Manicheus, who asserted that God was not the creator of the earth, or of any thing existing on the earth. St. Epiphanius says, that in a gospel written by Marcion, the words *Father* and *earth* were entirely omitted. Who does not here deplore the blindness of heretics, who, in order to spread their errors, do not hesitate thus to corrupt the original Scripture received by the whole Christian world!!! (Denis the Carthusian)

Ver. 25. *Eternal life?* The law of Moses does not expressly promise eternal life to the observers of it, but confines its promises to temporal blessings during this life. Still we always find that the Jews hoped in another life after this. This opinion is clearly observable in the books of Scripture, written both before and after the captivity, and in Josephus and Philo. (Calmet)

Ver. 29. *Neighbour?* It appears this was a celebrated controversy among the doctors of the law; some probably affirming, that the Jews only were so; while others maintained that their friends alone were their neighbours. (Maldonatus)

Ver. 30. *A certain man, &c.* This some would have to be a history: others rather judge it spoken by way of parable, to teach us to perform offices of charity towards all men without exception. (Witham) --- Were we to adhere to the mere words of this parable, it would seem to follow, that only those who do us good were to be esteemed our neighbours; for the context seems to intimate, that the Levite and the priest were not neighbours to the man who fell among the robbers, because they did not assist him. But according to the opinion of most fathers, the intent of this parable is to shew, that every person who has need of our assistance is our neighbour. (Maldonatus)

Ver. 31. Our Saviour here shews the Jewish priests how preposterous was their behaviour, who, though scrupulously exact in performing all external acts of religion, entirely neglected piety, mercy, and other more essential duties. The Jews despised the Samaritans as wicked and irreligious men; but our Saviour here tells them that they were less exact in works of charity towards their neighbours than the very Samaritans. (Tirinus)

Ver. 34. This is the allegorical meaning of the parable: The man that *fell among robbers*, represents *Adam* and his posterity; *Jerusalem*, the state of peace and innocence, which man leaves by going down to *Jericho*, which means the moon, the state of trouble and sin: the *robbers* represent the devil, who *stripped* him of his supernatural gifts, and *wounded* him in his natural faculties: the *priest and Levite* represent the old law: the *Samaritan*, Christ; and the *beast*, his humanity. The *inn* means the Church; *wine*, the blood of Christ; *oil*, his mercy; whilst the host signifies St. Peter and his successors, the bishops and priests of the Church. (Origen, St. Jerome, St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, and others)

Ver. 40. Calvin here ridicules the professors of evangelical poverty, because they gather from this place that there are two states of life, viz. the active and the contemplative, figured by Martha and Mary. But what will he answer, when he is informed, that this is the opinion not merely of monks, but even of a St. Augustine, (Serm. xxvii. De verbis Domini,) of a St. Jerome, (Com. 3 cap. of Jeremiah,) of a St. Gregory, and many others? Not that they were ignorant that there was another more natural explanation; but they were of opinion that nothing could be found more proper for the illustration of these different states of life. (Maldonatus)

Ver. 42. *One thing is necessary.* Some think that Christ's meaning was, that Martha was preparing many dishes, when one was sufficient. But others, that this *one thing necessary*, was to learn, and comply with the will of God; which Mary was employed about. (Witham)

Bible Text & Cross-references:

Christ sends forth, and instructs his seventy-two disciples. The good Samaritan.

1 And after these things the Lord appointed also other seventy-two: and he sent them two and two before his face, into every city and place, whither he himself was to come.

2 And he said to them: *The harvest indeed is great, but the labourers are few. Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he send labourers into his harvest.

3 Go: *Behold I send you as lambs among wolves.

4 *Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes; **and salute no man by the way.

5 Into whatsoever house you enter, first say: Peace be to this house:

6 And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon him: but if not, it shall return to you.

7 And in the same house, remain, eating and drinking such things as they have: *for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Remove not from house to house.

8 And into what city soever you enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you;

9 And heal the sick that are therein, and say to them: The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.

10 But into whatsoever city you enter, and they receive you not, going forth into the streets thereof, say:

11 *Even the very dust of your city that cleaveth to us, we wipe off against you: yet know this that the kingdom of God is at hand.

12 I say to you, it shall be more tolerable at that day for Sodom, than for that city.

13 *Wo to thee, Corozain, wo to thee, Bethsaida: for if in Tyre and Sidon had been wrought the mighty works, that have been wrought in you, they would have done penance long ago, sitting in sack-cloth and ashes.

14 But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you.

15 And thou, Capharnaum, which art exalted unto heaven: thou shalt be thrust down to hell.

16 *He that heareth you, heareth me: and he that despiseth you, despiseth me. And he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.

17 And the seventy-two returned with joy, saying: Lord, the devils also, are subject to us in thy name.

18 And he said to them: I saw Satan as lightening falling from heaven.

19 Behold, I have given you power to tread upon serpents, and scorpions, and upon all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you.

20 But yet rejoice not in this, that spirits are subject unto you: but rejoice in this, that your names are written in heaven.

21 *In that same hour, he rejoiced in the Holy Ghost, and said: I give thanks to thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones. Yea, Father: because so it hath pleased thee.

22 All things are delivered to me by my Father: and no one knoweth who the Son is, but the Father: and who the Father is, but the Son, and to whom the Son will reveal him.

23 And turning to his disciples, he said: *Blessed are the eyes that see the things which you see.

24 For I say to you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see the things that you see, and have not seen them; and to hear the things that you hear, and have not heard them.

25 *And behold a certain lawyer stood up, tempting him, and saying: Master, what must I do to possess eternal life?

26 But he said to him: What is written in the law? how readest thou?

27 He answering, said: *Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind: and thy neighbour as thyself.

28 And he said to him: Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

29 But he willing to justify himself, said to Jesus: And who is my neighbour?

30 And Jesus answering, said: A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, who also stripped him, and having wounded him, went away leaving him half dead.

31 And it happened that a certain priest went down the same way, and seeing him, passed by.

32 In like manner, also, a Levite, when he was near the place and saw him, passed by.

33 But a certain Samaritan being on his journey, came near him: and seeing him, was moved with compassion;

34 And going up to him, bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine: and setting him upon his own beast, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

35 And the next day he took out twopence, and gave them to the host, and said: Take care of him; and whatsoever thou shalt spend over and above, I at my return will repay thee.

36 Which of these three, in thy opinion, was neighbour to him that fell among the robbers?

37 But he said: He that shewed mercy to him. And Jesus said to him: Go, and do thou in like manner.

38 Now it came to pass as they went, that he entered into a certain town: and a certain woman, named Martha, received him into her house:

39 And she had a sister, called Mary, who sitting also at the Lord's feet, heard his word.

40 But Martha was busy about much serving: who stood, and said: Lord, hast thou no care that my sister hath left me alone to serve? speak to her, therefore, that she help me.

41 And the Lord answering, said to her: Martha, Martha, thou art careful, and art troubled about many things.

42 But one thing is necessary. Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her.

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2: Matthew viii. 37.

3: Matthew x. 16.

4: Matthew x. 10.; Mark vi. 8. --- ** 4 Kings iv. 29.

7: Deuteronomy xxiv. 14.; Matthew x. 10.; 1 Timothy v. 18.

11: Acts xiii. 51.

13: Matthew xi. 21.

16: Matthew x. 40.; John xiii. 20.

21: Matthew xi. 25.

23: Matthew xiii. 16.

25: Matthew xxii. 35.; Mark xii. 28.

27: Deuteronomy vi. 5.

Daily Bible Study Series (non-Catholic)

LABOURERS FOR THE HARVEST

Luke 10:1–16

After these things the Lord appointed other seventy men and sent them out in twos ahead of him into every town and place where he intended to go. “The harvest is great,” he said to them, “but the workers are few. Pray then the Lord of the harvest to send out workers for the harvest. Go! Look you—I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Do not take a purse or a wallet or sandals. Greet no one on the road. Into whatever house you go, say first of all, ‘Peace to this house!’ If it is a son of peace who lives there your peace will remain upon it; but if not it will return to you. Remain in the same house eating and drinking whatever they give you; for the workman deserves his pay. Do not go from house to house. If you go into any town and they receive you, eat what is put before you. Heal those in it who are ill, and keep saying to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near you!’ If you go into any town and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, ‘The very dust which clings to our feet from this town, we wipe off against you. But realize this—the kingdom of God has come near you!’ I tell you, things will be easier for Sodom in that day than for that town. Woe to you Chorazin! Woe to you Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which have been done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would long ago have sat in dust and ashes and repented. But at the judgment things will be easier for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you Capernaum—will you be exalted to heaven? You will be cast down to hell. He who listens to you, listens to me; and he who sets no value on you, sets no value on me; and he who sets no value on me, sets no value on him that sent me.”

THIS passage describes a wider mission than the first mission of the Twelve.

The number seventy was to the Jews symbolic.

(a) It was the number of the elders who were chosen to help Moses with the task of leading and directing the people in the wilderness (Numbers 11:16, 17, 24, 25).

(b) It was the number of the Sanhedrin, the supreme council of the Jews. If we relate the Seventy to either of these bodies they will be the helpers of Jesus.

(c) It was held to be the number of nations in the world. Luke was the man with the universalist view and it may well be that he was thinking of the day when every nation in the world would know and love his Lord.

There is an interesting sidelight here. One of the towns on which woe is pronounced is Chorazin. It is implied that Jesus did many mighty works there. In the gospel history as we have it Chorazin is never even mentioned, and we do not know one thing that Jesus did or one word that he spoke there. Nothing could show so vividly how much we do not know about the life of Jesus. The gospels are not biographies; they are only sketches of his life (cp. John 21:25).

This passage tells us certain supremely important things about both the preacher and the hearer.

(i) The preacher is not to be cluttered up with material things; he is to travel light. It is easy to get entangled in the things of this life. Once Dr. Johnson, after seeing through a great castle and its policies, remarked grimly, "These are the things which make it difficult to die." Earth must never blot out heaven.

(ii) The preacher is to concentrate on his task; he is to greet no man on the way. This goes back to Elisha's instruction to Gehazi in 2 Kings 4:29. It is not an instruction to discourtesy; but means that the man of God must not turn aside or linger on the lesser things while the great things call him.

(iii) The preacher must not be in the work for what he can get out of it; he is to eat what is put before him and must not move from house to house seeking better and more comfortable quarters. It was not long before the church had its spongers. There is a work called *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*. It was written about A.D. 100, and is the church's first book of order. In those days there were prophets who wandered from town to town. It is laid down that if a prophet wishes to stay in a place for more than three days without working he is a false prophet; and if a prophet in the Spirit asks for money or a meal he is a false prophet! The labourer is worthy of his hire, but the servant of a crucified Master cannot be a seeker for luxury.

(iv) To have heard God's word is a great responsibility. A man will be judged according to what he has had the chance to know. We allow things in a child we condemn in an adult; we forgive things in a savage we punish in a civilized man. Responsibility is the other side of privilege.

(v) It is a terrible thing to reject God's invitation. There is a sense in which every promise of God that a man has ever heard can become his condemnation. If he receives these promises they are his greatest glory, but each one that he has rejected will some day be a witness against him.

A MAN'S TRUE GLORY

Luke 10:17-20

The Seventy returned with joy. "Lord," they said, "at your name the demons are subject to us." He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from Heaven. Look you—I have given you authority to walk upon snakes and scorpions and over all the power of the Enemy. Nothing will hurt you. But do not rejoice in this—that the spirits are subject to you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

WHEN the Seventy returned they were radiant with the triumphs which they had wrought in the name of Jesus. Jesus said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from Heaven." That is a difficult phrase to understand. It can have two meanings.

(i) It may mean, "I saw the forces of darkness and evil defeated; the citadel of Satan is stormed and the kingdom of God is on the way." It may mean that Jesus knew that the deathblow to Satan and all his powers had been struck, however long his final conquest might be delayed.

(ii) Equally well it may be a warning against pride. The legend was that it was for a pride which rebelled against God that Satan was cast out of heaven where once he had been the chief of the angels. It may be that Jesus was saying to the Seventy, "You have had your triumphs; keep yourselves from pride, for once the chief of all the angels fell to pride and was cast from heaven."

Certainly Jesus went on to warn his disciples against pride and over-confidence. It was true that they were given all power, but their greatest glory was that their names were written in heaven.

It will always remain true that a man's greatest glory is not what he has done but what God has done for him. It might well be claimed that the discovery of the use of chloroform saved the world

more pain than any other single medical discovery. Once someone asked Sir James Simpson, who pioneered its use, "What do you regard as your greatest discovery?" expecting the answer, "Chloroform." But Simpson answered, "My greatest discovery was that Jesus Christ is my Saviour."

Even the greatest man can say in the presence of God only,

"Nothing in my hand I bring,

Simply to thy Cross I cling;

Naked, come to thee for dress;

Helpless, look to thee for grace;

Foul, I to the fountain fly;

Wash me, Saviour, or I die."

Pride bars from heaven; humility is the passport to the presence of God.

THE UNSURPASSABLE CLAIM

Luke 10:21–24

At that time Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit. "I thank you, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth," he said, "that you have hidden these things from the wise and clever and that you have revealed them to babes. Yes, O Father, for so it was your good pleasure in your sight. All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father; and no one knows who the Father is except the Son, and he to whom the Son wishes to reveal him." He turned to his disciples when they were in private and said, "Happy are the eyes which see the things which you are seeing for I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see the things that you are seeing and did not see them, and to hear the things that you are hearing and did not hear them."

THERE are three great thoughts in this passage.

(i) Verse 21 tells us of the wisdom of simplicity. The simple mind could receive truths that learned minds could not take in. Once Arnold Bennett said, "The only way to write a great book is to write it with the eyes of a child who sees things for the first time." It is possible to be too clever. It is possible to be so learned that in the end we cannot see the wood for the trees. Someone has said that the test of a really great scholar is how much he is able to forget. After all, Christianity does not mean knowing all the theories about the New Testament; still less does it mean knowing all the theologies and the Christologies. Christianity does not mean *knowing about Christ*, it means *knowing Christ*; and to do that requires not earthly wisdom but heavenly grace.

(ii) Verse 22 tells of the unique relationship between Jesus and God. This is what the Fourth Gospel means when it says, "The Word became flesh" (John 1:14), or when it makes Jesus say, "I and the Father are one," or, "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 10:30; 14:9). To the Greeks God was unknowable. There was a great gulf fixed between matter and spirit, man and God. "It is very difficult," they said, "to know God, and when you do know him it is impossible to tell anyone else about him." But when Jesus came he said, "If you want to know what God is like, look at me." Jesus did not so much tell men about God as show them God, because in himself were God's mind and heart.

(iii) Verses 23 and 24 tell us that Jesus is the consummation of all history. In these verses Jesus said, "I am the One to whom all the prophets and the saints and the kings looked forward and for whom they longed." This is what Matthew means when over and over again in his gospel he wrote, "This was

done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet saying ... “ (cp. Matthew 2:15, 17, 23). Jesus was the peak to which history had been climbing, the goal to which it had been marching, the dream which had ever haunted men of God. If we desire to express this in terms of modern thought we might dare to put it this way. We believe in evolution, the slow climb upwards of man from the level of the beasts. Jesus is the end and climax of the evolutionary process because in him man meets God; and he is at once the perfection of manhood and the fulness of godhead.

WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR

Luke 10:25–37

Look you—an expert in the law stood up and asked Jesus a test question. “Teacher,” he said, “What is it I am to do to become the possessor of eternal life?” He said to him, “What stands written in the law? How do you read?” He answered, “You must love the Lord your God with your whole heart, and with your whole mind, and your neighbour as yourself.” “Your answer is correct,” said Jesus. But he, wishing to put himself in the right, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbour?” Jesus answered, “There was a man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. He fell amongst brigands who stripped him and laid blows upon him, and went away and left him half-dead. Now, by chance, a priest came down by that road. He looked at him and passed by on the other side. In the same way when a Levite came to the place he looked at him and passed by on the other side. A Samaritan who was on the road came to where he was. He looked at him and was moved to the depths of his being with pity. So he came up to him and bound up his wounds, pouring in wine and oil; and he put him on his own beast and brought him to an inn and cared for him. On the next day he put down 10p and gave it to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and whatever more you are out of pocket, when I come back this way, I’ll square up with you in full.’ Which of these three, do you think, was neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of brigands?” He said, “He who showed mercy on him.” “Go,” said Jesus to him, “and do likewise.”

FIRST, let us look at *the scene* of this story. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho was a notoriously dangerous road. Jerusalem is 2,300 feet above sea-level; the Dead Sea, near which Jericho stood, is 1,300 feet below sea-level. So then, in somewhat less than 20 miles, this road dropped 3,600 feet. It was a road of narrow, rocky defiles, and of sudden turnings which made it the happy hunting-ground of brigands. In the fifth century Jerome tells us that it was still called “The Red, or Bloody Way.” In the 19th century it was still necessary to pay safety money to the local Sheiks before one could travel on it. As late as the early 1930s H. V. Morton tells us that he was warned to get home before dark, if he intended to use the road, because a certain Abu Jildah was an adept at holding up cars and robbing travellers and tourists, and escaping to the hills before the police could arrive. When Jesus told this story, he was telling about the kind of thing that was constantly happening on the Jerusalem to Jericho road.

Second, let us look at the *characters*.

(a) There was *the traveller*. He was obviously a reckless and foolhardy character. People seldom attempted the Jerusalem to Jericho road alone if they were carrying goods or valuables. Seeking safety in numbers, they travelled in convoys or caravans. This man had no one but himself to blame for the plight in which he found himself.

(b) *There was the priest*. He hastened past. No doubt he was remembering that he who touched a dead man was unclean for seven days (Numbers 19:11). He could not be sure but he feared that the man was dead; to touch him would mean losing his turn of duty in the Temple; and he refused to risk that. He set the claims of ceremonial above those of charity. The Temple and its liturgy meant more to

him than the pain of man.

(c) There was *the Levite*. He seems to have gone nearer to the man before he passed on. The bandits were in the habit of using decoys. One of their number would act the part of a wounded man; and when some unsuspecting traveller stopped over him, the others would rush upon him and overpower him. The Levite was a man whose motto was, "Safety first." He would take no risks to help anyone else.

(d) There was *the Samaritan*. The listeners would obviously expect that with his arrival the villain had arrived. He may not have been *racially* a Samaritan at all. The Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans and yet this man seems to have been a kind of commercial traveller who was a regular visitor to the inn. In John 8:48 the Jews call Jesus a Samaritan. The name was sometimes used to describe a man who was a heretic and a breaker of the ceremonial law. Perhaps this man was a Samaritan in the sense of being one whom all orthodox good people despised.

We note two things about him.

(i) His credit was good! Clearly the innkeeper was prepared to trust him. He may have been theologically unsound, but he was an honest man.

(ii) He alone was prepared to help. A heretic he may have been, but the love of God was in his heart. It is no new experience to find the orthodox more interested in dogmas than in help and to find the man the orthodox despise to be the one who loves his fellow-men. In the end we will be judged not by the creed we hold but by the life we live.

Third, let us look at *the teaching* of the parable. The scribe who asked this question was in earnest. Jesus asked him what was written in the law, and then said, "How do you read?" Strict orthodox Jews wore round their wrists little leather boxes called phylacteries, which contained certain passages of scripture—Exodus 13:1–10; 11–16; Deuteronomy 6:4–9; 11:13–20. "You will love the Lord your God" is from Deuteronomy 6:4 and 11:13. So Jesus said to the scribe, "Look at the phylactery on your own wrist and it will answer your question." To that the scribes added Leviticus 19:18, which bids a man love his neighbour as himself; but with their passion for definition the Rabbis sought to define who a man's neighbour was; and at their worst and their narrowest they confined the word *neighbour* to their *fellow Jews*. For instance, some of them said that it was illegal to help a gentile woman in her sorest time, the time of childbirth, for that would only have been to bring another gentile into the world. So then the scribe's question, "Who is my neighbour?" was genuine.

Jesus' answer involves three things.

(i) We must help a man even when he has brought his trouble on himself, as the traveller had done.

(ii) Any man of any nation who is in need is our neighbour. Our help must be as wide as the love of God.

(iii) The help must be practical and not consist merely in *feeling* sorry. No doubt the priest and the Levite felt a pang of pity for the wounded man, but they *did* nothing. Compassion, to be real, must issue in deeds.

What Jesus said to the scribe, he says to us—"Go *you* and do the same."

THE CLASH OF TEMPERATURES

Luke 10:38–42

As they journeyed, Jesus entered into a village. A woman called Martha received him into her house. She had a sister called Mary, and she sat at Jesus's feet and kept listening to his word.

Martha was worried about much serving. She stood over them and said, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me alone to do the serving? Tell her to give me a hand.” “Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered her, “you are worried and troubled about many things. Only one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the better part, and it is not going to be taken away from her.”

It would be hard to find more vivid character drawing in greater economy of words than we find in these verses.

(i) They show us *the clash of temperaments*. We have never allowed enough for the place of temperament in religion. Some people are naturally dynamos of activity; others are naturally quiet. It is hard for the active person to understand the person who sits and contemplates. And the person who is devoted to quiet times and meditation is apt to look down on the person who would rather be active.

There is no right or wrong in this. God did not make everyone alike. One person may pray,

“Lord of all pots and pans and things,

Since I’ve no time to be

A saint by doing lovely things,

Or watching late with thee,

Or dreaming in the dawnlight,

Or storming heaven’s gates,

Make me a saint by getting meals

And washing up the plates.”

Another may sit with folded hands and mind intense to think and pray. Both are serving God. God needs his Marys and his Marthas, too.

(ii) These verses show us something more—they show us *the wrong type of kindness*. Think where Jesus was going when this happened. He was on his way to Jerusalem—to die. His whole being was taken up with the intensity of the inner battle to bend his will to the will of God. When Jesus came to that home in Bethany it was a great day; and Martha was eager to celebrate it by laying on the best the house could give. So she rushed and fussed and cooked; *and that was precisely what Jesus did not want*. All he wanted was quiet. With the cross before him and with the inner tension in his heart, he had turned aside to Bethany to find an oasis of calm away from the demanding crowds if only for an hour or two; and that is what Mary gave him and what Martha, in her kindness, did her best to destroy. “One thing is necessary”—quite possibly this means, “I don’t want a big spread; one course, the simplest meal is all I want.” It was simply that Mary understood and that Martha did not.

Here is one of the great difficulties in life. So often we want to be kind to people—but we want to be kind to them *in our way*; and should it happen that our way is not the necessary way, we sometimes take offence and think that we are not appreciated. If we are trying to be kind the first necessity is to try to see into the heart of the person we desire to help—and then to forget all our own plans and to think only of what he or she needs. Jesus loved Martha and Martha loved him, but when Martha set out to be kind, it had to be her way of being kind which was really being unkind to him whose heart cried out for quiet. Jesus loved Mary and Mary loved him, and Mary understood.

The Gospel of Luke. 2000, c1975 (W. Barclay, lecturer in the University of Glasgow, Ed.). The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed. The Westminster Press: Philadelphia