

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit*

The Lord has Himself a 72 today.

“*Seventy-two others*,” Luke says. (10:1)

72—none of whom we know by name, family, height, weight, personality, or eccentricity.

We don’t know which seminary they attended or how they led their lives.

We don’t know whether they were alcoholics, abusive, or neglectful—

whether they were dynamic speakers or charismatic leaders.

And so we know that this passage is not about *them*.

And yet, the Lord appoints and sends His 72.

What’s important here, as usual, is the Lord Jesus and *His* work—

His ordaining, His sending, His speaking, His healing,

and His writing our names in heaven. (10:20)

So what’s with the 72?

Well, after gathering them all together and ordaining them into this holy ministry of preaching, Jesus says,

“*The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.*

*Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.*”  
(10:2)

And so they go, *sent* by the Lord, “*as lambs in the midst of wolves.*” (10:3)

Now, you know that the only thing lambs have to offer wolves is body and blood.

Wolves aren’t particularly picky about the whiteness of the wool, or the beauty of the bleating.

They simply want a meal—and the lamb is that meal.

So these 72 are sent out to be devoured—

food for the hungry, ravenous wolves.

In this way, the 72 stand in the stead of Christ—

the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

The 72 are *laborers*—workers, servants, those who say and do what they’re told.

They are to work in *His harvest*.

They don’t go on their own impulse and they don’t go alone.

The 72, called and ordained, do not go until they are *sent*.

And Jesus sends them without any frills:

“*Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road.*” (10:4)

No glamour, no wealth, no smooth-talking, no fail-proof methods of success—

all they have is the word of Jesus.

“Whenever you enter a town and they receive you...

Heal the sick in it and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’” (10:8-9)

“The Kingdom of God has come near to you” – really?

We see 72 homely, unexceptional men.

How is this *the kingdom of God*?

And how often do we hear the same of our church?

It’s not all that exciting.

The music is mediocre.

The service is predictable.

The preacher stands still behind the pulpit and for the most part reads a sermon.

And they’re clearly behind budget.

How often do we see church the same way:

just a bunch of words to and from God, and then a gathering at the rail for communion.

And yet, that’s exactly how our Lord sent the 72.

Again, it’s not about the 72, but about Jesus, who sends them.

And He sends them still today, to the ends of the earth—even to Grace and Trinity in Wichita.

The Lord gives His 72 as a gift.

They speak, heal, baptize, commune, and forgive—

all *in the stead and by the command* of their Lord, Jesus Christ.

But the temptation is to see the 72 as something other than a gift!

To have the 72 apart from the Lord, is to have them wrongly.

They don’t come by their own decision, drive, or vision.

They might not be eloquent or charming, and no doubt they’ve got faults.

But remember, they’re *laborers*, workers, servants—*food for the wolves*.

The Lord is their master. What He says, they say:

“*The one who hears you hears me,*” Jesus says. (10:16)

So the 72 are only as good as the Word they deliver—good only for the flesh and blood they give.

And the Lord sends out His 72 *for you*, a bunch of sinners, hungry and ravenous wolves.

He gives His servants for you to sink your teeth into—

that by devouring them you might also devour Him.

Again, it’s not about the 72, but about Jesus.

The Lord speaks; the Lord heals; the Lord feeds; the Lord forgives—

and yet it’s the 72 you see and hear and feast upon.

Wherever you hear the 72—*laborers*, servants, *Pastors*—

you hear the Lord who sent them.

But if you reject the 72—  
 the preaching and healing and feeding done by your pastor—  
 then you reject Jesus Christ, and His Father:  
*“The one who rejects you rejects me,  
 and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me.”* (10:16)

We don't determine what is preached,  
 neither you, nor me.  
 The Lord does the speaking, both *Law* and *Gospel*,  
 and by this speaking He does His healing and saving work.  
 By this Word, the *kingdom of God has come near you*.

Both pastor and people are tempted to judge success or failure based on what we do.  
 We're tempted to look at the moneybag or the charisma, the numbers or the programs—  
 and yet our Lord roots it all in His Word.

We're tempted to rejoice in the mighty works of power and growth, the casting out of demons  
 and the changes in our lives.  
 But then the Lord will kindly rebuke us saying,  
*“Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you,  
 but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”* (10:20)

This is the Kingdom of God:  
 preaching the Gospel, healing with forgiveness, and feeding upon the Lamb of God.

These are what our Lord gives to be devoured by wolves.  
 And once devoured, He uses these to turn wolves into lambs, sinners into saints.

This *Kingdom of God* comes near to you in the person of Jesus,  
 delivered by the mouth and hand of your pastor.

It's Jesus who gives Himself to you—  
 His flesh and blood,  
 His kingdom and His peace—  
 all for you freely as a gift.

And He does it through the 72, whoever they might be.

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