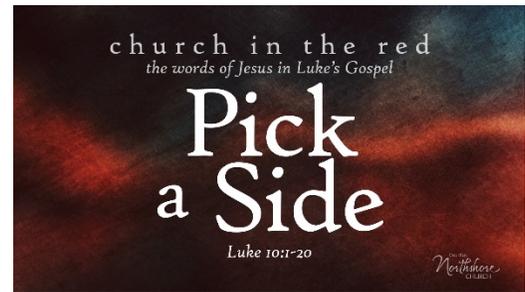


Pick a Side

It is a ***new chapter*** in our work through the Words of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 10.

You saw that I gave this message a title:
Pick a Side.



These are days when loud voices are calling us to pick a side.

Some of the choosing of sides is inconsequential, like sports. I'm glad sports are *kinda* back. I'm looking forward to NFL next month (even though it will be weird with empty stadiums; we're accustomed to the Mariner's playing baseball in a relatively empty stadium, but seeing the Seahawks at home without a packed house of screaming 12s will be really strange... but I'll take it since it is better than nothing). Picking teams is good fun and energizing and all... but the consequences of such choices are minor, not all that important on the grand scheme of things.

We are, literally, in the middle of political conventions. Loud voices are calling us to pick a side. For most of us, this is not as much fun as sports... but the choosing is more consequential. The political choices we make carry weight and have serious consequences (although not as serious as politicians often make themselves out to be; our governments generally move slowly, in small increments... which is good because it makes it harder for politicians to mess everything up, but that doesn't mean they won't stop trying).

I wish picking a political side was more like picking a team in sports, at least in one, significant way. Have you noticed that those who pick a team (a team in sports that is, fans) are often the teams most thoughtful, and even brutal, critics? When we pick the Seahawks or Mariners or Huskies or what-have-you, we are not expected to blindly support everything about that side. In fact, what seems to distinguish the best fans is their ability to expose the weaknesses on their side, whether their side is winning or losing (but especially if they are losing).

Not so with politics. With politics the expectation seems to be that we pick a side and then lose our minds. We are expected to pick a side and only see the other side as evil (*darkness* I believe I heard Thursday) and our side as righteous, and perfect. There seems to be an expectation of blindly (and I'll even say stupidly or perhaps uncritically) following one side or the other. The few brave souls who dare to criticize their side (regardless of the side) are usually branded as traitors, figuratively tarred-and-feathered and driven into no-man's land.

Friends, let's please not lose our minds.

I'm convinced that our Country is heading in the wrong direction, and **both** parties are taking us there. I just believe one party, these days, is not so intent on **rushing** us in the wrong direction, so I'll continue to usually go with them in hopes that maybe things will turn.

I like the way Evangelical thinker, Ed Stezer, put it a few days ago:

The Christian's role is not uncritical partisanship on some particular team.



It is to be like an umpire, calling balls & strikes-- to speak prophetically in the moment. That means at [political conventions] **#DemConvention, #RepConvention**, and in life.

When you cannot critique, you've become co-opted.

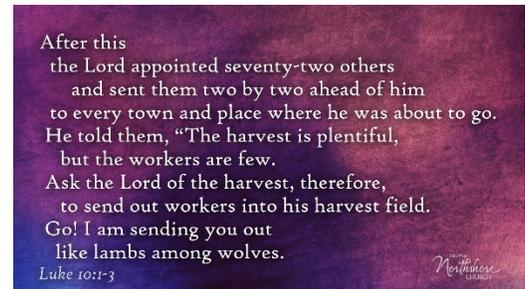
Not a mindless fanatic, but an umpire... calling balls and strikes regardless of side, based on standards that supersede the game.

Friends, let's please not lose our minds (or our hearts either).

If we are going to be defined by picking sides, while sports are fun, and politics is currently *in our face* and more consequential, there is a whole other realm, perhaps truly the only side to pick, that is front-and-center in today's passage.

I have in mind to take on the first twenty verses of Luke 10 today, a lengthy passage, so let's get the big picture by listening and watching.

Last week I talked about how we're at the beginning of the section of Luke (a 10-chapter section) that reports on the journey of Jesus and His followers from the Galilean region of Israel to Jerusalem. I also mentioned that it would be a 6-day walk if that is pretty much all they did... but they turned it into a 6-month-ish journey.



With his passage, we can begin to see why it took a while. A crowd was forming... not just any crowd, but a crowd that included followers who were up to such a task. Not only were they moving this crowd along the journey, there was work to do along the way.

This is similar to the way that Jesus sent out the 12 at the beginning of the last chapter. Without getting too hung up on the numbers, the number 12 is significant in that it correlates with the 12 tribes of Israel; the number 72 often represents the total of all nations. While it seems that the 72 stayed within the region, this is a significant expansion of the ministry... and the number 72 foreshadows the Lord's intent to see this Kingdom, the Gospel, spread throughout the world.

Last week, at the end of chapter 9, we saw Jesus confront potential followers with harsh realities... so harsh that they may have been discouraged and not followed after all (we just don't know). But here in this text it is clear that many did follow, so much so that this band of 72 could be sent.

But was 72 enough? Clearly Jesus didn't think so, saying:

"The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few."¹

This remains true today. There is so much that can be done, so much God can do through us... if only we'll get to work and gather more along the way.

The common perception of church in our culture is pretty much this: it is a place where some needy people come to be served by a few. That is not how we think about church at Northshore. We think of it not as a place where people **come** to get served, but a place where workers gather to **go**. Of course we bring our needs and we do serve one another, but our chief purpose is outward-focused, that all of us would be workers... that all of us would be goers... that each of us and all of us would be about the work of God's harvest, pointing people toward faith in Jesus. We do that however we can, wherever we are. I know that is easier said than done, but that is our goal and purpose.

"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

Gathering and sending out workers doesn't start with a marketing plan or recruiting plan; it starts with prayer. We start, and continue, by asking the Lord of the harvest to call and send workers. And what, then is the next step? It is right there in the text: Go.

Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.³ Go!³

¹ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Lk 10:2). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

² [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Lk 10:2). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

³ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Lk 10:2-3). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Prayer coupled with readiness to act. It is one thing to take our challenges and troubles to God and ask Him what is He going to do about it... but the better approach is to ask God what are **we** going to do about it.

³ Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. ⁴ Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road. ⁴

Again, Jesus makes it clear what His followers *are in for*. There will be opposition, and in the natural, it seems like His followers will be at a disadvantage, “like lambs among wolves.” Furthermore, just as Jesus instructed the 12 earlier, He calls His followers to go in faith, trusting God to provide through the hospitality of others.

If you are like me, you might have wondered about that matter of not greeting anyone on the road. That might seem rude... but only if we limit our understanding to our culture when greeting someone on the road would be as simple as a wave or a “hey, how’s it going?” In the culture of that day, greetings and salutations could be a long, drawn out, even days-long event, filled with complexities relating to differences in status and such. When Jesus said “don’t greet anyone” it was a matter of being focused on the task, undistracted during the journey.

When I travel, I have two modes. There is business mode that is planned, scheduled, efficient, unwavering (I’m in this mode most of the time when traveling, even short distances)... but there is leisure mode, open to diversion, not tied to schedule, ready for adventure. Laurie and I had one of those days several days ago driving a big loop around the Cascades (stopping at viewpoints, welcoming diversions, creating the route as we went). I could do a better job of intentionally traveling in leisure mode more often; we really had a great time as we celebrated 32 years of marriage.

Here, Jesus was telling His followers to travel in business mode. There was work to be prioritized.

⁵ “When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ ⁵

Peace is a rich word for us, but Jesus would have told His followers to say *shalom*... which is a word with even richer meaning. In our culture, peace is mostly about the absence of discord, whether relational discord, social discord, or even war.

⁴ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Lk 10:3–4). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

⁵ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Lk 10:5). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Shalom includes all of that, but expands to include well-being, euphoria, security, plenty, and such. When announcing shalom, the followers of Jesus were announcing something more along the lines of salvation than merely the absence of war. They were proclaiming the Good News.

Jesus told His followers to take the Good News from town to town, even home to home, marketplace to marketplace, network to network... hoping to find footholds for the Good News, soil in which the seeds of the Gospel would flourish.

If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you.

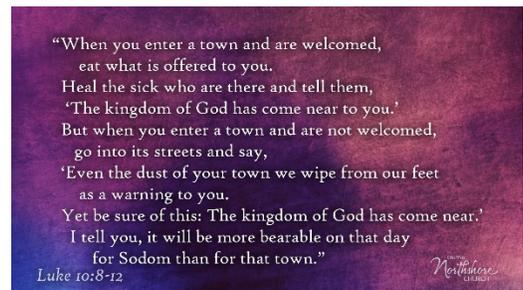
⁷ Stay there⁶

This wasn't *sales*, but I can see one of the first rules of sales and marketing at play here: ***fish where the fish are***. I know there are all sorts of ways to get an idea of where the fish might be (history, local knowledge, conditions, and such)... but when it comes down to it, the way you find out if there are fish there is to fish there... and if there are fish there stay there and keep fishing there. It seems that spreading the Gospel is something like that.

⁷ Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.

⁸ "When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you."⁷

Here is a culturally charged statement. That Jewish culture was thick with traditions and restrictions about food. Living the Jewish life was more than eating kosher... but eating kosher was a huge part of the religious life of Jews. Jesus was saying that spreading the Good News of the Gospel was far more important than being kosher... so eat what is offered you.



There are lessons for us there. It seems that sometimes we church people want the culture to conform to us before we bring the peace of the Gospel (we expect the culture to behave before they believe). Sometimes we erect cultural barriers, under the guise of what we might consider holiness. We may fail to reach someone because of cultural stuff that should not matter.

So, in the work of expanding the Kingdom, Jesus said then, and He says to us now, don't get hung up on cultural stuff that does not matter, rather:

⁶ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Lk 10:6-7). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

⁷ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Lk 10:7-8). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

⁹ Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'⁸

This is the business of following Jesus, proclaiming the Gospel, both in actions and in words.

Some will welcome the message, and the messengers, and others will not. That tragedy is portrayed in these next, weighty words of Jesus.

when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, ¹¹ 'Even the dust of your town we wipe from our feet as a warning to you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God has come near.'⁹

It is a warning, not a curse. It is simply acknowledging the reality that the only true, lasting, eternal peace comes from following Jesus, believing the Gospel, receiving His salvation, His shalom.

Jesus went on to say:

¹³ "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida!"¹⁰

Along with Capernaum, these were all places in the Galilean region they just left, places where Jesus preached the Gospel, healed the sick, and invited followers. Some followed, likely represented among these 72 and others... but most did not.

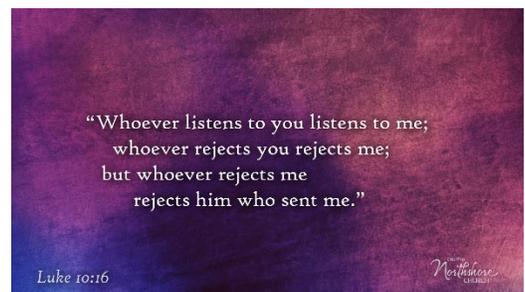
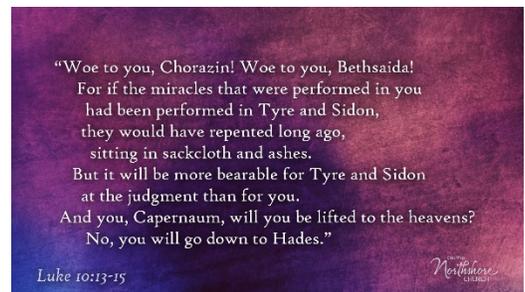
Capernaum, Bethsaida, and Chorazin should have been *where the fish were*; but for the most part they did not respond. It was tragic. Jesus supposed that had He done the same in Gentile cities, like Tyre and Sidon, they would have been more responsive... that Israel's Messiah would have found more welcome in far less likely places.

Jesus said:

¹⁶ "Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me; but whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me."¹¹

Put another way, Jesus is the Way.

We are called to believe Jesus; believe He is the Way. We are called to proclaim Jesus, demonstrating that He is the Way.



⁸ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Lk 10:9). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

⁹ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Lk 10:10–11). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

¹⁰ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Lk 10:13). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

¹¹ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Lk 10:16). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

But for those who reject the message, and the messengers, it is rejecting God... rejecting God with severe consequences. It is tragic... a tragedy that should motivate us all the more to spread the Good News as best we can.

In verse 17 the 72 show up again, after an unspecified season, with reports of success, saying:

“Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.”¹²

They found Jesus to be right, and powerful, in and through them. It was a cause for great joy... and another teaching opportunity for Jesus.

¹⁸ He replied, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.”¹³

We can wonder precisely what Jesus was talking about when He said He saw Satan fall.

Was it the primordial fall of Satan that Jesus saw in eternity past, preexistent as God with the Father and Spirit... the way the Prophet Isaiah saw Satan’s fall?

Was it that in the work of His followers, He was seeing Satan fall “like lightning from heaven” being defeated on the battlefield, struggling for souls.

Or perhaps it was a prophetic seeing into the future when Satan is vanquished for eternity future.

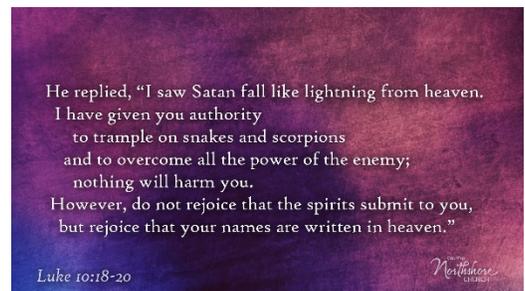
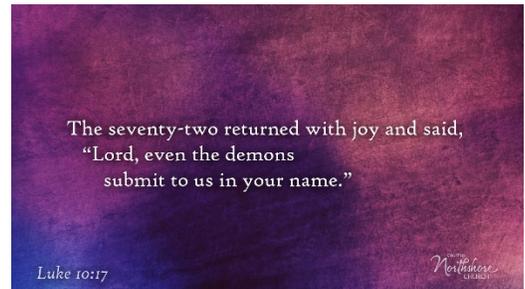
When there is ambiguity like this, I tend to embrace it and say it can be all three. The point is that Satan is defeated, Jesus is the victor, and He gives that victory to His followers, saying:

¹⁹ I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. ²⁰ However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”¹⁴

And that is the big point.

Miracles are great.

God’s provision is exciting, both directly from His hand, and more-often through the generosity of others.



¹² [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Lk 10:17). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

¹³ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Lk 10:18). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

¹⁴ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Lk 10:19–20). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Seeing the power of God over evil, delivering people from the control of darkness, is awesome.

But above all of that is the miracle of salvation, seeing names added to Heaven's role, including, of course, our names.

So... as I said... pick a side.

There is only one perfect side. That side supersedes every other side we might take.

Let's commit ourselves to that side.

It may be the first time to take that step of faith, believing in Jesus, confessing that He is the Way and turning to Him. Today is a day to believe. Friend, if you have not taken that step, make today your day and believe in Jesus. It can start with a simple, three-word prayer: Jesus, I believe. Pray that with me right now: Jesus, I believe. I know that God responds to that prayer, and if you are starting that journey with us today, welcome and congratulations.

I suspect that for most with us today, such a commitment is simply another step with Jesus, another day to believe.

Let's pick that side that supersedes all sides again today. Let's not lose our minds or our hearts to any other side. Left or right, progressive, liberal, moderate, libertarian, conservative... even Huskie or Coug, the ultimate side (God's side) rules over it all.

Today is a day to believe for us all... and another day to recommit to living on and for God's side.

Let's pray to that end.

Father, thank You for another day to live in and for your side... the side that supersedes all others. Help us to not lose our minds, or our hearts, and certainly not our souls, to any other side. Forgive us when we have. Give us gifts of direction, insight, and courage to prioritize Your way, to prioritize The Way, Jesus Our Savior and His Kingdom. We choose You again. Jesus, I believe. We pray in that Great Name that is above every other name, Jesus The Way. Amen.

