



CAPITOL COMMISSION

A Life that Brings Rejoicing (Luke 10:17-24)

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Jeff Whitebread / 484-680-4260 / Jeff.Whitebread@capitolcom.org

A detailed description of how the seventy-two extended Jesus' ministry in their travels is not recorded, but Luke's account resumes with the ecstatic return of these kingdom missionaries. They had come back to report to Jesus their activities and what they encountered in the various towns and places that Jesus himself was preparing to visit. While these disciples did not all return at the same moment, a theme develops in what was reported that prompts Jesus to address a concern. These thirty plus pairings of disciples must have expressed to the Lord a consistent message of joy followed by surprise that such power and authority was exerted through them in the discharging of their responsibilities. In this Jesus takes a moment to give them a bit of perspective, first on the ultimate outcome of the spiritual battle, then upon the true foundation of joy in one's life. What seems to be at issue in these men's hearts, like all men, is the speed at which one can jump from an understanding in what God chooses to do through them, to what this says about them.

The topic of joy continues as the author turns his attention to Jesus within the same setting. This section is instructive because it is the only time in the gospel narratives where one finds Jesus rejoicing. This occurrence allows us to again glimpse how this Central Section in Luke is tied to Deuteronomy which instructs the people of Israel about what it means to be obedient and blessed, or disobedient and cursed. In Jesus' day these concepts were viewed in an inverted and materialistic perspective: those who were blessed with health and wealth were obedient and righteous, while those cursed with poverty and sickness were evidently disobedient and sinful. When Mary, Jesus' mother, breaks out in a song of praise she declared a reversal of fortunes, where the proud in heart are scattered, but the humble are exalted, where the rich are sent away empty, but the hungry will be filled with good things. Jesus, the promised prophet, is now found filled with joy and offers praise to God because this reversal of fortune is being realized in his extended ministry. It is not only himself, or the chosen twelve which grasp the revolutionary nature of his work, but all who follow Jesus. All who have seen their own spiritual poverty are able to see God's revealed truth.

According to Jesus, God's truth is found exclusively in the Son, he is the means through which one connects and interacts with the Father. Without Jesus there can be no intimate knowledge of God, and man would be left stumbling around in the darkness. Even with Jesus, those who follow are still plagued with an uncontrollable desire to focus their attention squarely on themselves to the exclusion of God. They possess this instinctive tendency to take good things and make them ultimate things, to take God's gifts and blessings and allow them to fill one's heart with pride and self-reliance. This bent, or impulse can be seen in these missionaries who are empowered by Jesus to do a work, but find their joy focused exclusively on themselves. In comparison, Jesus' joy springs from the Father, and his wisdom. He reveals this to those that follow, joy and blessing come not by:

performance but standing, not by self-righteousness but humility, and not by pursuing our story, but being part of his story.

Luke 10:17-24 - (17) The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" (18) And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. (19) Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. (20) Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

(21) In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. (22) All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."

(23) Then turning to the disciples he said privately, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! (24) For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it."

NOT PERFORMANCE BUT STANDING

The seventy-two returned with joy – Before we begin, the purpose is not to impugn the character of the seventy-two. Overall they are portrayed positively in this scene. They reference Jesus as "Lord," they describe themselves as operating in Jesus' name, and as persons whose names are "written in heaven." However, the one thing a person finds as they connect with Jesus is his willingness to shatter all their categories. Here are faithful and devoted workers who have carried out Jesus' command and experienced a level of success, but Jesus desires to take them deeper in how they relate to him and carry out his work. What is it lurking in the background of these disciples' hearts that Jesus is seeking to expose? It is truly amazing when one experiences God using their life in unimaginable ways. While each of us tries his very best to hide his faults, failures and fears from the outside world, yet they are always with us. Is it not true that we both love ourselves and hate ourselves at the same time, and often have a hard time believing that the Lord could use us for anything truly valuable? Yet just wait, when the Lord imparts a gift and empowers by his Spirit our inclination is not praise to the Lord, but pride in what we have done. Did we not always believe that we had it in us, and now, finally, we have the opportunity to

BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS: TUESDAYS (SESSION WEEKS) AT 8:00AM, ROOM 100 RYAN BUILDING
STAFF, LOBBYISTS & LEGISLATORS: WEDNESDAYS (NON-SESSION WEEKS) AT 1:00PM, ROOM 315 MAIN CAPITOL

Pennsylvania

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show our true potential? Our thoughts say, “Is not the Lord blessed to have such a vessel to be used for his purposes,” maybe you don’t go there, but I certainly have walked this path numerous times.

Rejoice that your names are written in heaven – Jesus begins to address the foundation of the joy of the seventy-two by placing what they experienced into its true context. What they are engaged in according to Jesus is a cosmic battle in which Satan will ultimately be thrown down from heaven and Jesus will reign supreme. He knew, and could assure these men, that their work was indeed part of the great victory begun with his temptation in the desert and completed at the cross. After Jesus’ death and resurrection, and before his departure from earth he says, “All authority in heaven and upon earth has been given to me. Go therefore...” (Matt 28:18). These disciples are experiencing the theological conception of “already” and “not yet.” While the fall of Satan may be imminent and final, the present world contained serpents and scorpions. Their protection and the ultimate defeat of these demonic forces is found in the Lord alone. Into this conflict Jesus reminds them that the power they possess is on the basis of his authority, and what they accomplish is because of his empowerment. Then the true miracle, the wonder of the ages which should leave one awestruck and filled with unceasing joy is not what the Lord does through us, but what he secures for us. Rejoicing comes because of our standing and acceptance before a holy and righteous God through the sacrifice of the Son.

NOT THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS BUT HUMBLE

In the same hour he rejoiced...you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding – As noted earlier, this is the only reference to Jesus expressing joy contained in the Scriptures, and the circumstances surrounding this utterance may appear curious at first glance. Jesus’ joy comes from the unfolding of God’s plan. This should not be taken to mean there was some gap in Jesus’ knowledge of God’s will, as if he is learning of this truth for the first time. We have already alluded to the fact that Mary, by inspiration of the Spirit, spoke of these matters as recorded by Luke. Jesus also speaks of the intimacy between the Father and Son in such exclusionary terms that they alone know each other fully. In this moment of vision and delight, Jesus celebrated God’s strange purpose. If you needed privilege, learning, and intelligence to enter the kingdom of God, it would simply be another elite organization run for the benefit of the power brokers. At each chance the gospel turns this notion on its head. The intimate knowledge of the Father is not shared by the leaders of Israel. In rejecting the Son, they demonstrate the fact of not knowing the Father despite any outward impression to the contrary. As Psalm 36:2 says, “There is no fear of God in

their eyes. In their own eyes they flatter themselves too much to detect or hate their own sin.”

And revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. – The amazing thing about the message of the gospel is its unflinching honesty as it confronts the human heart. According to Jesus, the wise and learned (the self-righteous) are in a worse situation than the little children. All are sinful rebels before a God that demands to sit alone on the throne of our hearts. Both self-salvation projects are rejected by God. However is the little children, broken by sin who are able to view their lives with humility. They are able see that heir many pursuits have not filled the God-shape hole in their heart. The man who has no pride in knowledge, or imagined morality, has often the fewest difficulties in coming to a knowledge of the truth. Jesus tells the religious leaders, that the tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of them because of an unwillingness to repent and believe.

NOT OUR STORY BUT HIS STORY

Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! – How amazing it must have been to have walked with Jesus, to have been an active participant in his ministry. Jesus reminds his disciples of the privileged position they hold within all of redemptive history. Their lives are blessed because of the work in which they shared, proclaiming the arrival of the king and his kingdom. As seen previously, in language reminiscent of the first gospel promise to Adam and Eve in the Fall (Genesis 3:15), these followers had been empowered to tread on serpents, and received authority over all the power of the enemy. They were witnessing the climax of God’s plan of revelation and salvation. The ;OT saints of great faith had not witnessed this, the likes of David, Hezekiah, Josiah, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and many others did not receive what was promised. This great privilege was given to these disciples, they had been brought into God’s great story of redemption and their lives would be forever defined by their willingness to leave their own story and embrace his eternal story. Is this any less true for our lives today. We are a people fiercely committed to the pursuit of our own goals and self-actualization. What happens when the Lord invades our lives and makes demands that conflict with the story we are seeking to establish for ourselves. After recounting in great detail those commended for their faith the writer of Hebrews states the appropriate response is running with endurance the race that is placed before us. To engage fully in God’s story is to place before us the example of Jesus, his cross, suffering and shame. By leaving our story and joining his story, we also receive the kingdom that can never be shaken.
