

“Messengers, Neighbours, and Learners”

Text: Luke 10:1-42

~ Delivered at Central Baptist Church on Sept 9, 2018 by Pastor Barton Priebe

INTRODUCTION

- **(SHOW SLIDE 1)** This morning I want to look at a passage of scripture that tells us how to live as a disciple, or follower, of Jesus.
 - So perhaps you are new to Central. This will give you a clear sense of our DNA and what we are all about.
 - Perhaps you have been at Central for a long time. This morning I aim to re-ignite your passion to be actively involved in the mission to which Jesus calls us.
 - Or, perhaps you are here because you are curious about Christianity and have lots of questions. You are most welcome here. This message will enable you to engage some of the key things that Christians are about.
- Here at Central we have crystalized our vision down to one sentence. We aim to be a church that is **(SHOW SLIDE 2) renewing our community through the gospel.**
 - To renew something means to make it new. We begin with the basic fact that the world is broken and needs to be fixed.
 - We believe the gospel, or good news, of Jesus Christ is the answer to this. Jesus Christ has the power to renew your life, marriage, singleness, workplace, and your relationship with God.
 - By “our community” we mean ourselves, our city, and those places in the world where we can have influence.
 - So how do we go about bringing renewal to our community through the gospel? This is what Luke 10 is all about.
- The first nine chapters of Luke answer the question, “who is Jesus?” We learn that he is the Son of God. Since he is the Son of God, Luke 9 ends by calling us to be his disciples, or followers. The next question is, “what does it look like to be Jesus’ disciple?” Luke devotes the next nine chapters to answer that question.
 - Luke chapter 10 has three stories: the sending out of the 72 disciples, the parable of the Good Samaritan, and the incident between Martha and Mary. These are not disjointed stories but are all placed together because each story teaches one major thing about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.
 - This morning we will see that disciples are to be *messengers who declare the gospel, neighbours who demonstrate the gospel, and learners who delight in the gospel*. So, messengers, neighbours, and learners.

MESSENGERS WHO DECLARE THE GOSPEL

- **(SHOW SLIDE 3)** First then, **every disciple of Jesus is to be a messenger who declares the gospel.**
 - **READ 1 - After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go.** Then look at verse 3. **READ 3a - . . . Go your way; behold, I am sending you out.**
- Many Christians think being a messenger is for the professionals – the pastors and missionaries. We might be right about this if Jesus had only sent out the 12 disciples. But here Jesus sends out 72 everyday normal disciples to speak his message.
 - But why 72? Why not 36 or 103? Well in Genesis 10 we have a record of all the nations in the ancient world. And if you count them, there are exactly 72 nations. So here Jesus sends out

normal disciples to be his messengers and by sending 72 of them he is prefiguring the call for everyday disciples to be his messengers to every nation in the world.

- Listen, there are people whom only you can speak to. There are situations that only you can walk into. Jesus has called you to be his messenger.
- Alright, but what are we supposed to say? Look down at verse 9. **READ 9 - say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'** Or look at verse 11. When people reject the 72 they are to say, **READ 11 - 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near.'**
 - Jesus' message was also about the kingdom of God. In Mark 1:15 Jesus says, **"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."**
 - So the message we are to speak is the gospel, or good news, about the kingdom of God. Let's unpack that.
- This word, "gospel" is not actually a religious word. It was a common word in ancient times that was used to describe a joyous event that has happened in history that is so big that it changes everything for the better.
 - So for instance, archeologists have found a stone from 9 BCE. It has an official inscription carved into it that talks about the birth of Caesar Augustus, who was the Roman Emperor during Jesus' younger years. It describes Augustus' coming into the world as "gospel" – this event is joyous good news for everyone because a new era has begun when his kingdom will bring peace and salvation to all people and he will end war and bring order. The inscription then says, **(SHOW SLIDE 4) "the birthday of the god Augustus was the beginning of the gospel for the world."** **(Priene Calendar Inscription, 9 BCE)**
 - Now listen to the first verse of Mark's gospel: **(SHOW SLIDE 5) "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."**
- Do you hear it? The claim of Christianity is that an event has occurred in history – an event that is such good news that it far surpasses the birth of Caesar. This event is the coming of Jesus into the world. Jesus is God's king and in him God's kingdom of peace and salvation has come to the world.
 - So we are to tell people the good news that Jesus defeated our sin by dying on the cross so that we can be reconciled to God. We are to tell people the good news that Jesus defeated all the dark powers that bind us so that we can be free. We are to tell people the good news that God raised Jesus from the dead, that he is reigning right now, and that everyone has the opportunity to come into his kingdom before he returns to judge the world.
 - So we are to be messengers who tell people that a great event has happened in history that changes everything for the better. God sent Jesus into the world. Through Jesus God is renewing all things and so we need to believe this good news and give our lives over to King Jesus. Every Christian is to be a messenger who declares the gospel and urges others to believe it.
- But we need to pause here because on the West Coast people will say, **"This is exactly what I can't stand about Christians. You are always evangelizing and trying to covert people to your view of the universe."**
 - At first glance, that sounds like a plea for tolerance and Christians are intolerant. But, in fact, it is very intolerant. Why do I say that? Because you are saying that I need to reject my beliefs about Jesus.
 - Now you might say, **"No I'm not! I'm just saying you shouldn't try and covert other people to your beliefs."**
- But listen, my belief is that the good news about Jesus is for everyone and you are saying that I shouldn't tell others about it. So what you are really saying is that I should abandon my view that

Jesus *is* for everyone and covert to your view that Jesus is *not* for everyone. You are actually trying to covert me to your view of the universe.

- Do you see the irony here? When people say Christians should not evangelize or seek to covert others, they are actually doing their own form of evangelism that says, “**Covert to our view of the universe that says Jesus is not the Saviour of the world.**”
 - But we believe that the gospel is like finding the cure for cancer. It would be very wrong to keep such good news to one’s self. We certainly don’t want to jam it down people’s throats if they don’t want to hear it but we believe Jesus is the cure for all that is wrong in this world.
- Christian, are you praying that God would give you opportunities to speak? Are you seeking opportunities to have spiritual conversations?
 - You can always begin one simply by asking someone, “What are your spiritual beliefs?” Just have a conversation and see where it goes.
- Do you want to know what Central Baptist is all about? It is about the good news of what God has done for us through Jesus Christ. This good news thrills our hearts and we want others to experience the joy of it.
 - This is why we are committed to world missions and to partnering with agencies to take this good news to the ends of the earth. It is why we have Street Teams who seek to share the good news. It is why all of our ministries from children, to youth, to Sunday mornings are filled with teaching the Bible, which tells us this good news.
- This is why we encourage you to give generously. Do you realize how many different ways every dollar you give goes to enabling us to be messengers of the good news?
 - A portion of every dollar you give goes to support missionaries like the Rendles in Abu Dabi, the Inoues in Sudan, and the Richardson’s in Indonesia. A portion of every dollar you give enables us to run Club 456 and Youth Ministries that tell this joyous gospel to teenagers and kids in grades 4, 5, and 6. A portion of every dollar enables us to run Urban Adventures Camp in summer and send children to Christian camps. A portion of every dollar enables us to have pastors to preach and teach the Bible. Oh what a joy to give!
 - As you heard from our treasurer last week, we are \$91k behind budget. You have shown yourselves to be a generous people and we trust we will make up this deficit for our budget is about being messengers who declare the gospel.
- So that is the first thing we learn about what it means to be a disciple: every disciple of Jesus is to be a messenger who declares the gospel.

NEIGHBOURS WHO DEMONSTRATE THE GOSPEL

- But as we transition to the second point, we see that we are not just to be messengers who declare the gospel. Luke places the parable of the Good Samaritan next to show in the second place that **(SHOW SLIDE 6) every disciple of Jesus is to be a neighbour who demonstrates the gospel.**
 - We are not just called to care for people’s souls; we are also to care for their bodies.
 - We are not just supposed to talk; we are also supposed act to meet the holistic needs of people around us, regardless if they share our Christian beliefs or not.
- Jesus tells the parable of the Good Samaritan to a crowd of people but specifically to a Bible scholar who thinks he is a good person who deserves to be accepted by God. Jesus tells the parable to show the man what true love for our neighbours looks like so that this man will see how short he falls and so seek the grace of God.
 - So what does it mean to love your neighbour as yourself? Jesus tells a story beginning in verse 30. **READ 30 - A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead.**

- Then two religious leaders pass by. They see him lying half dead beside the road but cross to the other side. Jesus' hearers would have sneered at the hypocrisy of these religious leaders and would have expected Jesus to bring a normal everyday Jewish man in to save the day. But Jesus' next words shocked everyone.
 - Then look at verse 33. **READ 33 - But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.'**
 - We need to understand that Jews hated Samaritans and Samaritans hated Jews. Samaritans were ethnically different (they were Jews who had intermarried with foreigners). They were religiously different (they believed things that directly contradicted Jewish beliefs).
- Yet Jesus makes the Samaritan the hero of the story. The robbers may still be around but the Samaritan puts his own life at risk to stop and help. He gets his hands dirty, bandaging the man's wounds and disinfecting them with wine.
 - He gives up his own comfort putting the man on his donkey so he has to walk. He gives up his money paying the innkeeper enough money to cover food, shelter, and medical care for a few weeks and promises to pay any unforeseen costs that may be incurred.
 - And the Samaritan man does all of this for his enemy.
- So Jesus tells this parable to crush the self-justifying pride in all of us that makes us think we are good and loving people who deserve God's favour because we are basically good people. We do not love like this.
 - This insight should then humble us and say to Jesus, **"Please forgive my sins. Please change me and make me a truly loving person."**
- Then this parable becomes an example of how to love others. Jesus is saying that every Christian and every church is called to do acts of mercy on behalf of those who cannot help themselves. As we see needs, we are called to intentionally give up our comfort and get our hands dirty.
 - We are called to sacrificially give up our finances on behalf of those who cannot help themselves. We are called to cross boundaries of race, religion, and class. We are called to help people whom we normally disagree with and even despise.
 - We are to act as loving neighbours to everyone regardless if they are Christian or not.
- But how do we get love like that? You can't get that heart just by being told to love others. What you need is an experience of love that changes you.
 - You need an experience like Jean Valjean in the story *Les Misérables*. A priest gives him a place to sleep but he steals from the priest and hits him over the head. But when Valjean is captured the priest forgives him and lets him go. This experience of love changes him. For the rest of his life he serves those who are less fortunate.
 - We need an experience like Jacopo the smuggler had in the movie version of *The Count of Monte Cristo*. Jacopo is forced into a knife fight to the death with the main character, Edmund Dantes. Dantes has the chance to kill his enemy but spares his life. Jacopo is so moved by this act of love that he grabs Edmund's shirt and says, **"I swear...I am your man forever."** Jacopo then serves Edmund for the rest of his life.
- In the gospel we get this experience of love – we get an act of love so profound that it changes us. You see, the message of the gospel is that you and I are the man lying in the ditch on the side of the road. We had turned our backs on God our Creator and chose to live for our sin instead.

- But sin is not the friend it claims to be. Sin robs us of all we own. The evil one beats us down and leaves us on the side of the road. We cannot help ourselves. But God, in love, saw us on the side of the road and had compassion on us even though we are his enemies.
 - Out of love, God sent Jesus down the road to you. Jesus, the true and better Good Samaritan, gave up all the comforts of being God to become a man. He rescued you at great cost to Himself. He did not just risk his life; he gave up his life for us so that we might be healed. When you see that Jesus was a neighbour to you when you were unable to help yourself, it changes you to act as a neighbour to those who cannot themselves.
- Again, this is the kind of DNA we want at Central – a church that declares the gospel but also a church that shows acts of love to everyone regardless if they share our beliefs.
 - I am so excited about this new Neighbourhood Market. Starting this week, we are partnering with Living Edge to provide fresh produce and other healthy food to low-income families in our area.
 - And we will joyfully serve anyone who comes in here. It doesn't matter if they are gay, transgender, Sikh, Muslim, atheist, Jew, or Mormon - we will love them.
- You see, conservative Christians love the first point about evangelism but liberals can't stand the idea of evangelism. Liberals then love this second point about holistic care but it makes conservative Christians nervous that we are buying into a social gospel.
 - Notice that Jesus sees no contradiction between being a messenger who declares the gospel and a neighbour who demonstrates the gospel.
 - Every disciples must do both.

LEARNERS WHO DELIGHT IN THE GOSPEL

- There is one more story in Luke 10 and it is important that we look at it. If all we had was the sending of the 72 and the parable of the Good Samaritan we might think that to be a true disciple of Jesus means to always be busy doing something – to accomplish, to achieve, and to work.
 - That sounds exhausting. It sounds like a recipe for burnout. Luke places one more story at the end of Luke 10 to correct that misunderstanding.
 - In the third and final place, **(SHOW SLIDE 7) every disciple of Jesus is to be a learner who delights in the gospel.**
- The story here is very simple. Martha welcomes Jesus into her house. As the hostess, she then starts to prepare food. Look at verses 39 and 40.
 - **READ 39-40 - And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me."**
- Now Martha often gets a bad reputation but we must be careful. Verse 38 says she welcomed Jesus into her house. Is that a good thing? Of course. As the hostess, she then starts making food. Does someone need to make the food? Of course – Jesus does not rebuke her for making the meal.
 - She is doing everything right and yet she is doing everything wrong. Why? She is making the typical mistake we often make when we host other people: she is fretting and fussing so much about the details of hospitality that she forgets the whole point of hospitality, which is to delight in your guests.
 - This is a mistake we can all make but when the guest is Jesus then, as one commentator says, **"the mistake assumes cosmic proportions."**¹

¹ David E. Garland, *Luke*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 454.

- Look at verses 41 and 42. **READ 41-42 - But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.”**
 - A portion is a share in something such as food that satisfies or your share of an inheritance that makes you wealthy. Mary views Jesus and the words he teaches as her good portion.
 - She sits at his feet as a learner, delighting in him and his words. Mary shows us how to be a disciple for she is doing exactly what God commanded just one chapter earlier in Luke 9.
- On a mountaintop Jesus revealed his true glory to Peter, James, and John. Then Moses and Elijah appeared. Moses represents God words spoken in the Law. Elijah represents God’s words spoken through the prophets. Yet, Jesus’ glory outshines them both. And then God himself spoke and said of Jesus, **“This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!”**
 - And that is exactly what Mary is doing: listening to God’s Son and learning from him.
- Where are you at with this? Some of you are very busy in serving Jesus but do you delight in him? Do you just rest, listen, and sit at his feet?
 - Do you have a set daily time for prayer and reading the Bible?
- It is perfectly right and biblical to stop, sit, rest, and learn from Jesus. I have heard of pastors who rebuke their people from the pulpit saying, **“You should not be coming to church to receive. You should be coming to serve.”** They say, **“If you have been a Christian for more than a few years you should not be coming here to get fed, you should be feeding others.”**
 - Now I know why they say that. It’s because there are some other Christians who neither conservative nor liberal but are more contemplative. These Christians love to pray with other Christians. They go two or three Bible studies a week, are always in church, and read many Christian books.
 - They love this third point but are not very active in being messengers or neighbours. They just want to be fed. But this is like eating and eating but never getting off the couch. God wants us to eat and to enjoy it but we eat to gain energy for life. So contemplative types need to hear the first two points.
 - But when I hear pastors talk like that I am fear they are creating an equal but opposite problem: Christians who think hyperactivity is a sign of Christian maturity. There are many hyperactive Christians who are always serving but they have no ongoing relationship with Christ. They hardly read the Bible or pray. This is like trying to run a marathon without eating anything. You will eventually collapse.
- I make no apology in saying that we pray and work to make our Sunday worship service a feast for your soul – where you can be fed on the word of God, where you can delight in God, where you can find strength and say with Ps 73: **“My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”**
 - But listen, we aim for Sunday morning to be a feast for your soul, *so that* you are strengthened to be a messenger and neighbour. In our Community Groups we want to feed on the word together *so that* we can be active in serving together. In your personal life, set aside time each day to rest in God and his word *so that* you have the strength to serve.

CONCLUSION

- What does it look like to live as a disciple of Jesus, the Son of God?
 - A disciple is a messenger who declares the gospel.
 - A disciple is a neighbour who demonstrates the gospel.
 - And a disciple is a learner who delights in the gospel.
 - This is how we renew our community through the gospel