

# BELPRES CHURCH

**Sermon Title: Sent**

**Scott Dudley**

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## **Scripture:**

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### **Luke 10:1-9, 17-19**

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. <sup>2</sup> He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. <sup>3</sup> Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. <sup>4</sup> Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.

<sup>5</sup> "When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' <sup>6</sup> If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you. <sup>7</sup> Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.

<sup>8</sup> "When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you. <sup>9</sup> Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'

<sup>17</sup> The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name."

<sup>18</sup> He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. <sup>19</sup> I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.

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## **Transcript:**

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And our scripture comes from Luke chapter 10. And says this, "After the Lord, after this, the Lord appointed 72 others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he

was about to go. He told them the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Asked the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into the harvest field.

'Go, I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Do not take a purse or bag or sandals and do not greet anyone on the road. Heal the sick who are there and tell them the kingdom of God has come near to you.' The 72 returned with joy and said, 'Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.' He replied, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.'

I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy and nothing will harm you.'" So Jesus, please use these words to teach us. Help us to follow you. Help us to be part of what you're doing in the world. We pray this in your name Jesus. Amen.

Amen.

Amen.

Well, last month when my wife and I were in Europe, we went to the Museum of London and there was a group of elementary age kids there on a school trip. And it's nice to see that some things are the same all over the world because these kids they were making a ton of noise, they're pushing and shoving. Right? One kid said, "Teacher Tommy pushed me into a pillar." Teacher said, "I shall speak with Tommy."

And then another teacher called them all together and said, "I can't believe I have to say this to you, but this is a museum and these people didn't come here to listen to your noise." And the teachers were just exhausted and frazzled and you could just hear it in their voice. One kid said, "Teacher, teacher, my pet hamster died yesterday." And in this weary tone the teacher said, "Yeah, circle of life."

Do you ever... Not a compassionate response, right? Do you ever feel like that, like life is just one hassle after another? Right? You get up, you go to school, you go to work, then you go to bed, you get up, you do it all over again until you die. Circle of life. It doesn't have to feel that way, doesn't have to feel that way.

We've been doing a sermon series on following God's leading in uncertain times. And one of the things that is clear from the Bible is if we follow God's leading, we will not be bored. Because we were made, you were made to be more than just an employee or a student or an employer, more than a consumer. You were made on purpose for a purpose.

And when we live our purpose, life never just feels like circle of life. As we've shared with you throughout this sermon series, our purpose as a church is to participate with Jesus in furthering the kingdom of God on the East side and the places in the world he sends us.

And the kingdom of God, that phrase, what it means is when things happen the way God wants them to happen. It's poor people getting out of poverty. It's divisions between husbands and wives or kids and parents or different races being reconciled. It's unjust systems being repaired. It's people finding courage and hope and meaning and purpose and joy and finding Jesus in the process. And our world is desperate.

The kingdom of this world needs to become the kingdom of God. And Jesus calls us to be part of bringing his kingdom both inside this church and outside this church where you live, work, play, or learn. And when you are involved in bringing God's kingdom, life never just feels like one darn thing after another. Life gets a lot bigger.

And we see this in the passage that I just read, where Jesus sends out a bunch of people to bring God's kingdom through his power. And so let's just kind of walk through this almost like one phrase at a time, one verse at a time to kind of understand how being part of bringing God's kingdom transforms us and it heals the world.

And it says this. It says, "After this, the Lord appointed..." I'm going to stop right there. You are appointed. You're not just like some person, you're a special person. You are appointed to carry Jesus love and healing at your school, your job, the store, the gym, your neighborhood, your assisted living facility. The Lord appointed 72.

That number is significant because in back in Genesis in the Old Testament, chapter 10, Genesis, there's a list of the nations and there are 72 of them. So the number 72 became symbolic for meaning just everyone. So who is appointed? You, you, you, all of you. All of you are appointed. The Lord appointed 72 and sent them. Sent them where? Well, sent them out, out of themselves, out of focusing only on me and mine.

Because if I focus only on me, my world will be no bigger than me and my life will be no bigger than me. And I don't know about you, but me gets on my nerves sometimes. I've known me a long time and me is often complaining, me is often unhappy when me doesn't get exactly what me wants. I mean, he's just so needy, needy, needy. I'm getting sick of me.

Are you sick of me? Not me, you're me, you me. Are you getting sick of me? Because me is just always like, "I need, I want, I need, I want." Jesus sends us out of the confining prison of me into the big open world. You are sent, your job to your job, your school, your gym, your store.

You're not there by accident, you are sent to bring God's blessings to this world. Throughout the Bible, there's this pattern where God says, "I'm going to bless you and then I'm going to send you to be a blessing to others." So for instance, when God calls a man named Abraham whose descendants become the nation of Israel, which produces Jesus, God says, "I will bless you.

I will make your name great and you will be a blessing and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." And then there are a host of other places in scripture on that slide there that where God says really similar things, "I'm going to bless you so that you bless other people."

And the point is, any blessing you have isn't just for you, it's meant to be given away to bless other people. Your money, your life experiences, your connection, your time. God gives you those things to bless other people. The New Testament says, "For we are God's handy work created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do."

In other words, you are not just a random assortment of atoms that happen to come together just sort of randomly, you were made on purpose for a purpose." There are some needs God designed you to meet. There are some hurts God designed you to heal. There are some hands God designed you to hold and there are some problems that God designed you to fix.

And if we do not live our purpose, we will be frustrated and bored and unfulfilled because we're not living into what we were created to do. And I think deep down we know this, we know this. A man from our church recently told me about the church that his brother goes to and it was growing really fast to the point where they needed to expand their facility.

But the pastor didn't want to do a capital campaign to raise the money, so he decided to sabotage the growth. This is a true story. Right? So in his sermons, he started calling people out and challenging them that they're not doing anything, they're just occupying a seat and they're not doing anything with the blessings that God had given them, hoping that that would shrink his church.

To his horror, it did the opposite. It turns out that's what people actually wanted to hear and they started growing even faster. So he got stuck with the capital campaign and now they have a balcony to accommodate all the new people. And what that tells me is that deep down we know that we were designed to be more than spectators.

We were designed to be more than just part of the 80/20 rule that exists in every church where 20% of the people do 80% of the giving and 80% of the serving, and 80% aren't really very much engaged. We know, we were designed not to be that. We were designed on purpose for purpose and we actually want someone to tell us that and tell us to get in the game.

The Lord appointed 72 and sent them two by two. So we don't do this alone, this bringing God's kingdom, whether that's teaching Sunday school or telling someone about Jesus or serving in some way or working for justice, we don't do this by ourselves. We need other Christians around us, which is why we encourage you to be in all in groups so that you have people around you to pray for you. How are you bringing God's kingdom?

How can we support you? How can we pray for you and to support you? And some all in groups have a common mission together. Some all in groups are doing things like supporting refugee families or maybe an all in group could say, "You know what? Together we're going to take this, teach Sunday school for second graders or fourth graders for a year."

And between all of you, you can cover every Sunday of the year. Do you know what that does for kid to be surrounded by a community of adults? What that does for their faith? We do this together. Okay, we are done with the first verse. Only 19 verses left to go. I will pick up the pace, don't worry. Jesus sent them two by two. He told them the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.

In other words, there are a lot of people who are ready in Jesus phrase to be harvested. They are ready to hear about Jesus and they're ready to hear about God's kingdom. And we don't think that's true. We think nobody wants to hear about Jesus and God's kingdom. Well, some people don't, but other people do. And they're asking religious questions.

The Holy Spirit has been working on them, life has been working on them to use Jesus metaphor. They are ripe, they are ready for harvest to hear about God's kingdom. And they're asking religious questions like, "Why am I here and isn't there a bigger purpose in life? Why am I bored?" They're asking questions like, "How do I fix this problem I face?"

And their questions have ripened and their heartaches have ripened and their fears have ripened and their disappointments have ripened and they are ready, even desperate to hear the good news about Jesus, that there is another kingdom than the kingdom of me. There is another kingdom than the kingdom of this world.

There is another kingdom than the kingdom of some politician. There is the kingdom of God and that is a good place to be. And who's going to tell them? Who's going to show them that? Oh, that's right, you are. Yeah. No, don't be looking at your neighbor, don't be looking at your spouse, don't be looking at the pastor.

You, God has appointed you and he is sending you to tell them. And Jesus gets really blunt in the next verse about this. He says, "Go!" Exclamation point. "I am sending you out. Go!" Not stop, not wait, not think about it, not form a go committee to study the feasibility of going and talk about going and study books about going and making plans about going, g, g, g, go. Do not take a purse or bag or sandals. What?

You can imagine the disciples are, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. What's this about not taking anything, not even a bag to carry my books about going? You're sending me

unprepared, unequipped, untrained?" And Jesus is basically saying, "You're not unequipped. You have the Holy Spirit, rely on him, the spirit of Jesus himself." So constantly be asking the Holy Spirit to guide you.

So show you where he's sending you. Give you the right words to say in the right moments. And then follow those nudges he's giving you, rely on the Holy Spirit. My oldest daughter is out of college and is now adulting. But it's hard to adult at first, so for a while she kept calling us to ask things like, "How do I find a doctor?" And "How do I find a place to get the oil changed in my car?"

So finally I said something to her that I swore I would never say to my kids. I said, "When I was your age..." Oh, it just slipped out, right? Suddenly I was my father. "When I was your age, I had to figure all of this out without the internet. I had to use something called the Yellow Pages. It was a dark and terrible time.

But you have a tool that you are not using. Use the Google machine on the inter webs." When it comes to participating with Jesus to bring his kingdom, whether that's telling someone about Jesus or working for justice or teaching Sunday School, there's a tool we're not using, the Holy Spirit. And we're relying on ourselves rather than praying and seeking his guidance.

And a couple of weeks ago in a sermon we talked about how do you actually hear the Holy Spirit and know what he's telling you to do. Now for some things we do need some training so that we don't do harm. And we provide that for those things, but there's a lot of stuff you don't need equipping for, you don't need a class for. Just like listening to a coworker in pain, you don't need a class on that.

The Holy Spirit can help you do that. And it's by doing that we actually become trained. See, Jesus here doesn't train his disciples so he can send them out, he sends them out to train them. So we go and we go with a power. Don't wait till you have taken 10 classes on something. You can do it right now. Go and rely on the Holy Spirit to give you the things to say, to point you who he wants you to talk to.

Because that creates relationship with Jesus. And the relationship is what changes us to be like Jesus. After I told my daughter to use Google to find an oil change place, a few days later I realized, "You know what? She knows how to use Google. Of course, she knows how to use Google." She wasn't calling for the information. That's not why she was calling.

She was calling for the relationship, to still know there's someone there to guide her no matter how adult she gets. It was about the relationship. The Holy Spirit is always there to guide us. Then Jesus tells his disciples, "Heal the sick." Because part of how God uses us to advance his kingdom is to meet people's real needs, emotional, social, physical needs.

And then Jesus says, "Tell them the kingdom of God has come near to you." And notice the message, it's not Jesus died on the cross to pay the price for your sins so you can go to heaven. Yes that, but it's much, much bigger. It's about the kingdom of God coming near to us. See, we think the gospel just means good news about Jesus. We think the gospel changes us so that we can go to heaven.

The gospel changes everything, everything. The gospel isn't the minimal entrance requirements for heaven. The gospel changes everything. It's husbands and wives reconciled, people knowing Jesus, unjust systems replaced with just ones. Businesses run in ways that bring life and flourishing to employees and community alike.

It's not just about going to heaven after we die, it's about participating with Jesus to bring heaven here while we live. And when we do, and when we do, look what happens. The text says the 72 returned with what? Joy. Doesn't say they returned having done their duty, returned having checked the box, returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name."

And Jesus replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning. I have given you authority to overcome all the power of the enemy." In other words, the power of the Almighty God can flow through ordinary you and ordinary me. Even the demons submit to me in Jesus' name. That is so cool, right? Scott Dudley demon master. I'm like my own video game.

When we do this, we experience God's power and we see all of Satan's plans to hurt this world and to hurt people, we see all of Satan's plans fall like lightning. Who would want to be part of that? Because it is one of the best feelings in the world to hear someone tell you, "You changed my life." You are made on purpose for a purpose.

And when we live our purpose, our lives get bigger. And so many of you do this, so many of you do this inside our church, outside our church. If you are one of the 20% that is engaged here, you don't have to do more, but maybe invite someone from the 80% that's not yet engaged to do with you whatever it is you are doing, so that everyone can experience the power of God flowing through us to heal the world.

So what is that for you if you're not engaged yet? Maybe it's to help the next generation know Jesus by teaching Sunday school. Maybe it's to help with hospitality here so people come to church and feel warmly welcomed, which makes them feel a part of a community.

Maybe it's to befriend a lonely person at work or at school. Or coach soccer in a way that shows people Jesus and values kids for who they are, not for how they perform. And if you don't

know where the Holy Spirit is sending you, don't use that as an excuse to do nothing. Just do something. God can steer anything except a stationary object. Just start somewhere.

And after the service, there are people in the lobby by the welcome desk with iPads, they can sign you up for something today or have a conversation about where you could serve. God always leads us, especially in uncertain times to be part of his rescue mission. I got an email from a woman I'll call Alice. And she said, "Back when I taught sixth grade, I served as a translator for medical teams during my vacations and felt blessed to be part of healing in the Dominican Republic."

And she said one time right before a trip, a mother of one of her students gave her a \$20 bill and said, "I don't have a lot of money, but I am praying that the Lord uses this greatly." And so Alice thanked her and put the \$20 bill in an envelope. And for the two weeks that Alice was in the Dominican Republic, she prayed every day about where God would want her to give that \$20 bill.

There's lots of need. There's no question there was lots of need, but she wanted the Holy Spirit to guide her to the right place. Well, on the night before she was supposed to go back to the United States, a man named Fernando invited her to come back to his home with him, which was in the country. Every day Fernando would walk from his house in the country into town to sell seashells that he had polished up to tourists.

And Alice thought, "Well, maybe I'd like to buy some of these shells for my class." And Alice had gotten to know him over the two weeks and just really felt like God, the Holy Spirit was nudging her to go. So she did. And they walked for miles. She said it just took a really long time to get to his house. And she kept saying, "Are we there yet? Are we there yet?"

Finally they got to his house, which was just scrap metal, kind of held together, connected by boards, and there was a blanket draped across the center of the room. And Fernando said that behind it was his sister who was very sick, very weak. They didn't have money for a doctor and he was afraid she was going to die. And Alice said, "Suddenly I knew why God had sent me." There's that word, "Sent me to Fernando." It wasn't for the shells, it was to meet his sister. And she said, "Bring your sister to the hospital tomorrow so our doctors can look at him." And she said, "God sent me to you for this." And she said, "On the way back to town, I said to Fernando, Let's pray.

And we knelt on the ground and we prayed for his sister. We thanked God for what he was going to do. And then Fernando walked me back all the way to my hotel. So I didn't get lost. And as we said goodbye, I put the \$20 bill that that mom had given me into his hand and said, 'This is for your sister.' And I told him about the mother who had given it to me."



Well, the next day, Fernando came running up to her, huge smile on his face. He said, "Alice, Alice, Alice, the doctors examined my sister and they prescribed some medicine that's going to make her better. And the cost of the medicine was 1,140 pesos. Exactly \$20 to the penny. Not 1 cent more, not 1 cent less." What are the chances of that? Right? That's clearly God.

And Alice said, "Imagine my joy sharing with his mother what her \$20 prayer had done." God sent her to Fernando. She followed the nudge from the Holy Spirit, met practical needs, healed the sick, but also met spiritual needs. He prayed with him and helped them overcome their loneliness and showed them that God is with them, that they're not alone. And she got to be part of bringing a little bit of God's kingdom here on earth as it is in heaven.

And not just for Fernando, but for the mother who gave her the \$20 and for whose students that she could tell that story to. See, things like that happen when we live sent. When we live our purpose, God shows up. And yes, sometimes it's hard to do. And yes, it can take time. And sometimes it takes a long time, maybe even years before we see God show up. But in the end, it always leads to joy.

And if every Christian did this, if every single Christian did this, our world would be so much better. I read something recently about how many Christians in our country right now are hoarding food and hoarding money because they're convinced that we're headed for the apocalypse that's talked about in the Book of Revelation in the Bible. And maybe we, maybe we aren't, whatever.

But here's the thing, even if we are headed toward the apocalypse, God didn't give us the book of Revelation so that we would build bomb shelters and hoard food. That's not why he did that. He gave it to us so we'd invite our neighbors over to dinner and tell them about Jesus and bring lonely people into community and help marriages be strong and work for justice and to heal injustice, help kids know Jesus and feel surrounded by an army of adults.

Our version of Christianity is so scared. Protect, protect, protect, defend, defend, defend. God, it is such a, it's a fear laden distortion of the brave faith that Jesus and the early church launched. Jesus is not afraid. He makes the wounded whole. He brings good news to the poor. He sets at liberty those who are oppressed.

In the name of Jesus, the devil quakes and darkness turns to light and illness turns to health, and sorrow turns to joy. And we are the sent ones to show the world that because of Jesus, we have nothing to fear and everything to hope. You are sent, I am sent, we are sent to a world that is desperate to hear the good news that the gospel changes everything.

So Jesus, thank you that you send us. You could do it without us, but you want to do it with us so we have a relationship with you. So Lord, thank you that you send us. And we ask that you

would nudge us, show us where you want us to go, what you want us to do, what you want us to say.

And Lord, keep nudging us until we actually go and do it. And Lord, we will trust you for the results. Move through us, through your power and through your love and through your grace so that we see Satan fall like lightning. And we will give you all the glory and all the praise. In your name, Jesus. Amen.

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### **Discussion Questions:**

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*Read this week's scripture(s) & answer the below questions with your friends, family, or All In small group.*

**Icebreaker Question:** If you could go back in time, what is one piece of advice you wish you could give your younger self?

**Opening Question:** Looking back, were you able to apply any of the things we talked about last time to your life this week? What did you do? How did it go?

**Scripture Reflection Questions:** Read this week's scripture together and discuss the following:

- What do we learn about God (e.g., traits, personality, what matters, priorities) in this passage?
- What do we learn about people, and ourselves in particular, this week?

**Sermon Reflection Questions:** Reflecting on this week's sermon, discuss the following:

- Have you ever felt sent but not equipped to go? How did God meet you in that moment? Share about a time that the Holy Spirit equipped you as you went.
- In what ways do you feel like you are already participating in bringing the Kingdom of God? Who else can you bring along with you as you go?

**Closing Question and Application:** Given what we've discussed together today, how might God want you to apply these learnings to your life or in the life of your community this next week? Who might you share this with?

**Closing group prayer:** Spend a few minutes together in your group sharing prayer requests and then praying together for each other. Thank God for the time together, the conversation shared, the other people in the group, and for encouragement in the week ahead.