

BELPRES CHURCH

I WANT YOU TO MEET SOMEONE

Luke 10:1-9, 17-21

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Well, I want to say hello to the 11 o'clock service and our middle schoolers, and our high schoolers, and all of you. Thank you for being here. We are in a sermon series called All In about going all in for Jesus. And before I preach, I'm going to invite Isabelle up. Isabelle as a high school student and she is all in for Jesus, and she has started a Christian club in her public high school and she's going to tell us a little bit about how that happened.

So starting a Christian club on my campus has just been something that's always been on my heart, I just never had the courage to act on it. And so after Extreme Week I reached out to pastor Steven and he got me connected to the Director of Fellowship of Christian Athletes for Seattle area. And so we met for coffee with him, Steven, and then Katie who leads FCA at Bellevue high school. And I was like, "I have this interest in starting a club at Lake Washington." And he was like, "Oh, that's funny because a couple of days ago the head coach for your football team actually called me and was like, 'Hey, I also have an interest in starting this club.'" And I was like, "Wow, that is so cool. God's doing something here and I want to be a part of it." And so I worked with coach Arina and we got together a group of like six student leaders at our school and we would meet for coffee and we finally turned in an application. The normal turnover for club applications is about a week, ours did not get approved for three months.

I guess it went to the district level to get approved or something like that. And then once we were approved, we started meeting. We put up posters around the school, and so our club motto is Meet People, Experience Love, and Encounter God because our club is called Encounter Club. And so we put that on our posters and as soon as we had hung them up, our leadership teacher's like, "Actually wait, you need to get them approved by administration because they now want to start approving club posters before they get put up around the school." Which had never happened before. And so I went to see the Principal and she was like, "Oh yeah, we can't have God on the posters. That's not inclusive of everyone." And so after half a lunch period of passive aggressively arguing with her over what I can put on the posters, she was like, "Okay, I'll get back to you. I'll go check the rules and we'll see what I can do."

And the week later I was like, "So what'd you find?" And she was like, "Oh yeah, you can put the posters up." So we put the posters up and now we've been meeting with like 13 normal regular attendees.

That's awesome. So you started this club, you had to overcome some opposition and push through that. What's this experience been like for you, your faith, your relationships? What's it done for you?

For me personally, these last few months I've been pretty hard. I've been clinically diagnosed with anxiety depression, and I'm in therapy. I'm on medication and it's just, it's there. It's not really dragging me down, it's just like a dark cloud that's over my head, like, "You can't do very much." And so having this club and this community in our high school, because I know in a public high school especially, it's really easy to feel alone and isolated. You're like, "Wow, I'm the only one here who believes what I do." And so having this community around me who supports me and can also relate to what I'm going through is really helpful and has helped me keep me grounded in my faith.

Awesome.

Thank you.

Thank you, Isabelle. That's how a high school student goes all in. So that is an all in high school student. Thank you very much. That's not easy to do particularly in our culture today. So thank you for your courage in doing that, Isabelle. Holy Spirit come and do what I can't do, what my words can't do. Help us follow You more. And we pray this in Your name, Jesus. Amen. So I want to start this sermon by telling you a little bit of good news because mostly what we hear these days is nothing but bad news, right? So here's some good news. According to FBI statistics, over the last 30 years, violent crime has fallen 51% in 30 years. Cut in half in 30 years. Globally, according to the World Bank, the number of people in poverty has been falling by 46 million people every year, and it has never been lower. Global poverty. The number of people killed by war around the world is half of what it was just four years ago.

Around the world ... Here's a fact, around the world, people are safer, healthier, and have more of their basic needs met than in any other time in human history. Now, don't get me wrong, there's still plenty of stuff going wrong. People are suffering in poverty and injustice, and we need to pay attention to that. We need to act on that. But to keep things in perspective, we need to hear some good news once in a while. So you know what I just did there? You know what the word for what I just did there is? Evangelism. Some of you don't believe me, that I just did ... You just were all evangelized. That word "evangelism" is just a Greek word that means to bring good news. That's all it means. Bring good news. In fact, Microsoft even has a job titled Evangelist to share the good news of Microsoft. But let me ask you this. Let me ask, when people who don't go to church hear the word "evangelism", do you think they think it sounds like good news?

Or do you think they say, "Man, I hope someone evangelizes me today because I need me some evangelism. This is an evangelism day." Do you think that people who don't go to church say that? No, of course not. Because in our culture, evangelism conjures up all these images of people yelling outside CenturyLink Field before a game because nothing says, "Jesus loves you." Like telling people they are going to hell. And the word "evangelism" has all kinds of political connotations to it these days, but that's not what it means. Evangelism means good newsing in people, and we are called to be good

newspapers who good news people wherever we live, work, play or learn as Isabelle is doing in her high school. And that's what she's good newsing people. This week I got a text message on my cell phone and in all caps it said, "Scott, your prayers have been answered.", "Awesome. My prayers have been answered." And it says, "You have been pre-approved.", "I'm pre-approved. My own mother doesn't pre-approve me, but this company pre-approves me for a \$5,000 line of credit." I don't want that.

What I really want is to know how they got my cell phone number. That was not good news. That was not real good news. But Jesus is genuine life-changing good news. In my own life, He has helped me have much more meaningful relationships. He has guided me to a bigger life than I would have chosen for myself that included everything from eating guinea pig 12,000 feet up in the Andes with Quechua people, to dancing in a worship service with Rwandan prisoners in a Rwandan jail, murderers in a Rwandan jail. All which always may sound terrible to some of you, but I liked it, and that's the point. A much bigger life than I would have chosen because He called me to do things that were hard and uncomfortable that I might not have done myself if He hadn't forced me into it. Jesus gives me courage when I feel timid. He assures me I am loved when I feel worthless.

He helps me see in pastor Tim Keller's words that I am more sinful than I would ever dare to imagine and therefore unworthy of heaven, but I am also simultaneously more loved than I would ever dare to believe. And so Jesus died to pay the price for my sins and your sins that deep down we all know somehow needs to be paid, and He wipes my guilt, and He wipes my shame. Jesus is good news. And when you got good news, it is selfish not to share it. If you had the cure for cancer and you kept it to yourself, that would be immoral. A guy named Penn Jillette, he's part of the magic duo, Penn & Teller. Some of you've heard about. He's an atheist, but he says he has no respect for Christians who cannot evangelize. He says, "If you really believe that life is better with Jesus and you really believe that there's a heaven and a hell, how much do you have to hate someone not to tell them about it?" See, if we've experienced the life altering love of Jesus, we are called to share it.

Not force it on others, but invite people into a relationship with Jesus. Because one of the things all in followers do is they make other all in followers of Jesus. One of the things disciples do is they make other disciples. If we're not making disciples, we're not disciples. So what I want to do just briefly is going to walk through the story we just read, one verse at a time because it shows us how we can bring good news to people, introduce people to Jesus. And in the process, we get a bigger life when we do that. So the text starts out with this, "The Lord appointed 72 others." So these aren't Jesus' 12 disciples, 72 normal people. This isn't just for pastors. "And He sent them two by two." And that "sent", that's a very important word. We are a sent people. See, what consumer Christianity does is it says, "I go to church, and I get filled up, and I get comforted, and all of that. It's about me, and it's about Jesus helping me meet my goals. It's all about me. It's all about me." No, it's not.

That song was so amazing. "Jesus, You don't owe me anything. Jesus, I'm not here to ask You for anything." Oh my gosh, that is the anti American Christian song, right? Because consumer Christianity is like, "Jesus, here's what I need today." Right? But that's not ... Yes, Jesus meets us. Yes, Jesus gives us peace, power, courage so that, so that ... There's a so that, we can be sent to people who are desperate for some good news. And notice He sends him two by two because we need each other to help us do this. The Bible says, "We are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." It's an amazing verse. What it says is all your experiences, all your talents, your race, your age, your failures, your successes, your hurts, your joys, all of that has shaped

you to meet certain needs that only you can meet, that God prepared for you before you even born. There are certain people you've been designed to help, particular things you have been shaped to do, certain demons you've been formed to defeat.

This is a huge adventure that Jesus calls us into. Then Jesus goes on and He says, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few." We don't really believe that, do we? We don't really believe that the harvest is plentiful, that there are people out there dying for a little bit of good news. So we're afraid to talk about Jesus, we don't want to offend someone. But I think the more angry and divided and sexualized our culture gets, the more people are going to be thirsting for good news, thirsting for a relationship with Jesus. But notice what I said there, thirsting for a relationship with Jesus. You know what they're not thirsty for? They're not thirsty for your opinion, or your politics, or your knowledge, or your doctrine. People aren't thirsty for that. See, this isn't about getting people to agree with your theology, or your politics, or your worldview. You're introducing them to Jesus. It's a relationship you're inviting people into not a religion you're forcing on them, and that makes all the difference. It's saying, "I want you to meet someone who changed my life, His name is Jesus."

And there are more people thirsty for this than I think we believe. So then Jesus continues and He says a very important word, "Go. Go." Notice He doesn't say, "Come to church and get filled up, and just be in your holy huddle." No, "Go. Yes, come to church for sure. Come to church and then go, go out. Go. Go. Get you gone. Heidi hens, go, go." I mean, not now because I'm still talking. But when I'm done, go. Get out of here, go and bring people good news. Don't take a purse or a bag with you or sandals. What does that mean? Is travel light. But more than that, it means don't rely on yourself. When you're talking about Jesus, don't rely on your own resources. Always be asking the Holy Spirit, "Lord, give me the right thing to say. What do You want me to say right now? What do You want me to say right now?" Then Jesus says, "When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace.' To this house. If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them. If not, it will return to you."

Lots of peace there. So here's a really important thing to understand about good newsing people. I want to introduce you to a phrase, people of peace. People of peace are people who are open to hearing about Jesus. I think evangelism is hard for us sometimes because we think, "Well, I got to go to these people, they're angry and they're hostile and they don't want nothing to do with Jesus." No. No. No. No. We're called to love those people and show them the love of Jesus in hopes of making them open to hear about Jesus. But when it comes to actually talking about Jesus, we ask the Holy Spirit to guide us to people of peace. People who are already ... they want to hear it, they're open to it. And then Jesus goes on, "Go to those houses." And He says, "Stay there eating and drinking whatever they give you, do not move around from house to house." So this may strike us as a little odd. Right?

So is Jesus telling me to be that annoying house guest that never leaves and just eats everything in the refrigerator? Is that what ..." No, I don't ... In Jesus culture, hospitality was a huge value. There were no hotels, there were very few inns. And so travelers would stay with people, people that they didn't even know often. And I think what Jesus is getting at here is stick with people, don't do hit and run evangelism, "Jesus loves you. Goodbye." Walk with people over months and years and show them Jesus over the long haul. Then Jesus says, "Heal the sick." because part of introducing people that Jesus is meeting their real tangible needs, their physical needs, their emotional needs, social needs, spiritual needs. Meet their needs, care for them and tell them, "The kingdom of God has come near to you." And

notice the message, it's not just, "Jesus died to pay the price for your sins, now you can go to heaven." Yes, that too, but so much more. So much more. "The kingdom of God is near."

And what that phrase, "The kingdom of God is near." Means is it's whenever anything is happening the way God wanted it to. When relationships happen the way God wants them to happen. When the poor are given a hand up. When divisions are eradicated. When marriages and families are restored. When businesses are run in a way that blesses, and empowers, and enriches both the employees and the community. It's not just about going to heaven after we die, it's so much bigger than that. It's about partnering with Jesus to bring heaven down here on earth as it is in heaven. That's the kingdom, bigger than, "You're going to heaven." And then Jesus says, "Whoever listens to you, listens to Me. Whoever rejects you, rejects Me." Don't take it personally. If you talk about Jesus and folks ridicule you, don't take it personally. It's Jesus they're rejecting, so don't get upset about it. I told you a couple of weeks ago how when I was teaching at Stanford, I was very open about my faith and most people, 90% of the people were cool with that. But there were a few people who made fun of me.

One person called me Bible boy, and she didn't mean it as a compliment. I survived. No trauma, we're good. I didn't need to go into therapy over that one. Other things, yeah, but not that. I survived. And yeah, sometimes it may be a little uncomfortable to talk about Jesus, yes. But guys, God calls us to do hard things. Our God wants to do big things and those are hard things. And so sometimes God calls us to do hard things, but you know what happens when we do? You know what happens when we do? Well, what does the text say? "The 72 returned with ..." What? Joy. It doesn't say, "The 72 returned having fulfilled their duty, having checked the evangelism box." It says they returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in Your name." And Jesus replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning, and I have given you authority to overcome all the power of the enemy." In other words, the power of the almighty God of the universe can flow through me, little old me. Even the demons submit to me in my name. I mean, that's amazing, right?

That's so cool. Scott Dudley, demon master. I am my own video game. And Satan and all of his schemes to wreck marriages and hurt people and divide people, all of his little schemes fall like lightning to the ground. Who wouldn't want to be a part of that? Who wouldn't want to be a part of giving the devil a black eye? It is such a great feeling. It is an amazing feeling to have someone look at you and say, "You changed my life forever." It's so fulfilling. Now, just in case we get a big head about it, Jesus goes on and says, "Do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." In other words, yeah, sure feel good about changing someone's life because that's fulfilling, but don't let it go to your head. It was Jesus working through you, you didn't do it all on your own. And that's evangelism is in a nutshell, it is easier than we think. If you take away anything from this message, it is easier than you think. It is not hard.

And I know it raises all kinds of questions, practical questions. "Well, how do I do that? Exactly, pastor, how do I do that? What do I say? Give me the sentences. What do I say first? Where do I say second? What's the plan? What's the formula? What's step one? What's step two?" Oh, my little linear sequential flock filled with engineers, and more engineer, math majors. I love you. I love you. So here's the formula. You're not going to like it. Follow the Holy Spirit's nudge. Follow the Holy Spirit's nudge. It's not a science, it's an art. And we're going to talk in a few weeks about how to follow the Holy Spirit, but it's about paying attention to the Holy Spirit's nudge. Talk to that person. Say this, go over there. "Well, what if I screw something up? What if I say the wrong thing?" Really? Do you really think that your screw

ups are something the almighty reigning sovereign God of the universe can't handle? Like God's up there going, "Whoa, I held the universe together for eons, but Fred there just said something awkward to a coworker. I'm out, I can't handle this."

Oh, please, you're not nearly that powerful. God can use even your screw ups. Back when I was a college pastor, I remember once I gave just this horrible talk. It made no sense, it was a disaster. And afterwards there was a student trying to comfort me and I'll never forget what he said. He said, "Scott, look at it this way. Maybe God wanted you to give a bad talk." I was like, "Why? Why would God?" And he said, "Well, I brought my roommate today and he's not a Christian. And I was really hoping that you would say something that would make him want to be a Christian. But after your lousy talk, he's never coming back again.", "And you're trying to comfort me because this isn't ..." And he said, "But let's say three years from now, let's say three years from now, he goes to another church and he hears a great sermon by a really good preacher and he's moved to want to become a Christian. But my roommate is very proud, so he would never be able to admit that he was wrong all those years about not following Jesus.

But now that he's heard your lousy talk, maybe he'll think, 'Well, if I'd heard a really good sermon about Jesus, I would have followed Jesus then. So it's not my fault I rejected Jesus, it's that Dudley guy's fault.' And you'll get the blame and his pride won't be offended and he'll become a Christian because of your lousy talk." And I said, "I never thought of it that way before." God can use even your screw ups. If for no other reason than it shows people that we're human and we're not perfect, but God loves us anyway. "Well, what if I do all that and they don't become a Christian?" That's above your pay grade. That's above your pay grade. Our job is just to point people to Jesus. I have been the one to lead people in prayer as they make Jesus their leader and their forgiver, it's awesome. But usually I'm just one step in a very long process. So let me mention just a couple of practical tips.

We're going to talk a lot more on Wednesday night at the rest of the story about how to have spiritual conversations with neighbors, and people at school, and teachers, and all of that stuff. Kids, parents. So come on Wednesday night. But for now ... We'll do some more on Wednesday night. But for now, just a couple of things. First, make people thirsty. Jesus says that He is the living water, and He also says you are the salt of the earth. Salt makes people thirsty. Live in a way that makes people thirsty for the living water Jesus brings. You've heard me say this before, evangelism is doing those things that provoke the question, the answer to which can only be Jesus. So by the way we live, by the courage we have, by the joy we have, by the ways we love and care and serve for others, live in a way that makes people thirsty for Jesus. Live in a way that provokes the question, the answer to which can only be Jesus. Second, ask God to show you opportunities and then look for them. And that second part is really important.

Every morning, pray, "God, show me opportunities I have today." But then expect Him to show them to you, so be looking for them. I do this with Uber drivers, baristas. I get in a conversation, they share a struggle with me. I'll often say something like, "You know what? I follow Jesus and He helps me with these kinds of problems, so I'm going to pray for you." And you know what they always say? They always say, "How dare you? How dare you shove your religion down my throat? I'm so offended." Said, not one of them even once. Well, sometimes they'll say something like, "Well, I'm an atheist, but what do I have to lose?" But I've never had someone be offended because I don't do it in a pushy, "You got to think and believe just what I think and believe." Kind of a way. Third, get curious. Be genuinely curious about people's lives. Not in a weird, creepy stalker kind of way. But just like genuinely, "What are your

struggles? What's going on in your life?" Ask questions and tell stories. Ask questions, tell stories. Ask questions, "How you doing? What's going on?"

Tell stories about how Jesus has helped you or the people you know. "Well, what if they ask an intellectual question and I don't know the answer to it?" Oh no. That would be a tragedy, wouldn't it? That would tear a hole in the space time continuum, wouldn't it? Or, or, you could say something like, "I don't know, but I'll find out." Super easy. Fourth, invite someone to church. Maybe Easter or maybe before Easter, invite someone to church. Just say, "Hey, would you like to go to church with me?" Let's practice that, repeat after me. "Hey, would you like to go to church with me?"

Hey, would you like to go to church with me?

I would. Thank you very much. See, see how easy that is? That is so easy. And you bring them here and we'll do our best not to embarrass you when you do. And then last, speak the name of Jesus. Speak the name of Jesus. You know you've heard me quote before, St. Francis of Assisi, "Preach the gospel always when necessary. Use words." St Francis and I are wrong. We must always use at least one particular word and that is the name of Jesus. Not "God", because in our culture that can mean all kinds of ... the great force, whatever. But Jesus, we are talking about a particular kind of God, the only true real God who loved us enough to become human and suffer everything we suffer. No other God had that much guts to die, to reconcile us to Him. No other God had that much love. And then rise again from the grave, no other God has that much power. Speak the name of Jesus.

There's a woman, I'll call her Lisa, and her husband who I'll call Bob, told me a story recently about how they were not Christians and there was no huge problem in their life and things were actually going really well. But then Lisa got invited to a moms group similar ... at a church, similar to what we've got here and that sounded good to her. She had small kids, the chance to connect other moms. That sounded great. Well, out of that, she got invited to go to a course called Alpha, which explains what it means to be a Christian for people who aren't. Well, meanwhile, her husband, Bob would describe himself as an atheist. He'd had a colleague who was out running one day and got shot and killed, and that made Bob even more of an atheist and thought if there was a God he wanted nothing to do with that God. But he was curious about what Lisa was learning in Alpha, so she'd come home and he'd ask her all kinds of questions.

And he said, "I was intrigued because people weren't cramming something down her throat and just conversation. And no question was out of bounds." Which was great because he had a ton of questions and he kept expecting these Christians to get all judgmental toward Lisa, but they never did. Well, at the end of the Alpha course, there was a celebration dinner and Lisa invited Bob to come along with her. He didn't want to go because he figured there'd be all this pressure to convert and become a Christian. But he went anyway, just sat down next to this guy and they started talking about the Mariners, and the Seahawks, and kids, and work, and all that stuff. And he just randomly sat with this guy at this dinner and liked this guy, and eventually said, "Well, what kind of work do you do?" And the guy said, "Well, I'm the senior pastor here." And Bob said, "I had not developed a good exit plan, so I was stuck." But the pressure never came.

That intrigued him even more, so Bob and Lisa signed up for a couples Alpha course, which eventually led them to make Jesus their leader and their forgiver and it's changed everything. Bob said, "I always liked to be the person in control and the result of that was a lot of stress and a lot of anger and a lot of frustration. Now I'm learning to let Jesus control and I'm not nearly as angry, not nearly as stressed out. My coworkers have noticed and they're grateful for that." Lisa says she feels their marriage is deeper because now they're on a spiritual journey together. She says, "It's deepened my friendship. It's also helped me to serve my father-in-law who has Parkinson's disease better." She said, "Before being a Christian, I just felt impatient about it. It was hard to deal with. But now with Jesus' help, I have a lot more love. I have a lot more patience. It's made all the difference in the world." Now, you know what I like about that story? It's ordinary. It's normal. No huge crisis, no giant problem. Things were actually going pretty well for them.

Sometimes you hear stories in church about becoming a Christian, they're kind of over the top, "I was a drug addict and a gambler, and I was mean to bunny rabbits. But then Jesus ... and now the bunnies, it's good." And yeah, that happens. But their life was good. Their life was good, but they discovered it could be bigger, richer, deeper, with Jesus. They were thirsty for what Jesus brought, and they were people of peace. And people showed them how Jesus had changed their lives, good newsed them over the long haul until they made Jesus their leader and forgiver and changed their lives. And there are thousands of Bobs and Lisas, thousands of people out there dying for just a little bit of good news. Who's going to tell them? Someone's got to tell them because they are so thirsty for a little bit of good news in their life. How lovely on the mountains are the feet of them who bring good news? So who is this? Who is the Holy Spirit leading you to good news at school, or at work, or wherever you are?

Ask questions, tell stories, live in a way that makes people thirsty for Jesus. Jesus who makes the wounded whole, who proclaims good news to the poor and recovery of sight to the blind, who sets at liberty those who are oppressed. In the name of Jesus, we can boldly approach God, unashamed, unafraid because our sins have been wiped clean in Him. At the name of Jesus, the devil quakes, the demons flee, darkness turns to light, mourning turns to dancing, and sorrow turns to joy. Because there is power, power, wonder-working power in the name of Jesus. It's such good news, you just got to tell somebody about it. So Jesus. You are nothing but good news, Lord, and help us to good news people this week, wherever we live, work, play, or learn and point them toward You. We ask this in Your name, Jesus. Amen.

Discussion Questions: Read Luke 10:1-23

1. Why does Jesus send the people out two by two? Why did he tell them to travel light?
2. What is their basic message? What do they mean by it?
3. What do you make of verses 10-16? How would you paraphrase these verses in your own words? Do they seem harsh to you or not? Explain.
4. What are the results of their mission? What "reward" do they get?
5. How will you apply this to your life this week?