**Rejoice in This!**

Based on [Luke 10:1-20](http://biblia.com/books/esv/Lk10.1-20)

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Pentecost 7

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In today’s gospel, we have a foreshadowing of what we call the office of the holy ministry, the pastoral office, the office first given to the apostles of preaching and teaching and, yes, miracle working. We see here an example of how Jesus chooses to work through people. Jesus doesn’t save people directly. Jesus doesn’t come to your door a knocking directly. He sends people in his place, to go out before him, to preach the good news and work miracles in his stead and by his command. He sends others to act in his place, to minister on his behalf. Like it or not, that’s just how Jesus operates. **That’s why his church is called his body, because now that he’s ascended, he doesn’t work apart from it.** If you are a hockey player, how many goals are you going to score without using your body? If you wish to volunteer for some charity work, how useful are you if you sit on your hands? So too, Jesus promises to forgive sins, to preach peace, to work miracles of faith; but he will only do so through his body, the church.

Now in the time of our text, the church is not officially formed yet. In fact during his earthly ministry, Jesus says he “*will* build his church" on what his apostle say about him, but his apostles don’t do so until after Jesus dies and rises again, until they understand that Jesus died for our sins and was raised for our justification. **Jesus doesn’t build his church until Pentecost day.** But today's gospel lesson anticipates that day that his church will be built. Today he sends out seventy-two ministers to go out ahead of him two-by-two into every town. And he gives them special instructions for ministry. And ladies and gentlemen, what do you think are their marching orders?

Well, if you ignore what the bible actually says, and instead listen to pop christianity, here’s what it will tell you Jesus said. Jesus said to into the houses of *young families* get to know the people and find out where they are at “spiritually.” Jesus says, “**Listen to my words O sent ones. Find people who are “hurting”, and learn their heart language, so that you can repackage my gospel and deliver it in a meaningful way to each person according to their “life situation.”** Jesus tells them to go and *affirm* people and tell them that God *accepts them just the way they are.* “**Go my ministers**” Jesus says, “**and tell everyone they are special, and agree with and validate everything they have to say because the Truth has set us free to believe whatever we want to believe**.” “**You have a difficult task ahead of you**” Jesus says, “**And that is why I will breathe on you the Holy Spirit so that you can provide spiritual care through the spiritual gift of "active listening” and “servant leadership."**

Ladies and Gentlemen, contrary to what popular Christianity teaches, Jesus did not send forth guidance counselors to build his church. He sends out ministers. What’s the difference? It’s huge! A counselor is supposed to help you by assisting you in pursuing your goals and by affirming your ambitions. Ministers, on the other hand, are supposed to help you by speaking to you Jesus words of Law and Gospel, the very message that Jesus has actually given to tell. And that message just might destroy your goals and ambitions. You see the difference is huge. One confirms you in your character and in whatever you hold to be true; the other confirms you in Christ, or not at all.

And so Jesus sends out 72 ministers to go out two-by-two ahead of him into every town. And these are his real marching orders. He tells them to bring no possessions or food, because they are to trust in God and rely entirely on the provision and hospitality of others. **He tells them to greet no one on the road because small talk goes no where, and time is of the essence.** He tells them not to be choosy about which house to enter, but whatever house you come upon enter first and give the blessing of peace. This blessing is not an idle phrase, but it is a blessing from God himself that goes out upon those who hear it. This is the blessing of peace that communicates that the wrath of God against sinful mankind is about to be assuaged, satisfied, payment is about to be made and the judgment of God will be absorbed by one man upon the cross. These apostles didn’t know how this peace, flowing from Christ like a river, was going to be accomplished, but this message of peace is the Gospel; and it's like a glass of cold water in the desert to those who fear the Lord and the condemnation of the law.

But there are those who do not fear the God almighty. There are those who would reject the lordship of the Lord. And so Jesus prepares those whom he sent to be rejected...and this is the message of peace that the church has today. Though friends, family and society might reject the Lord, they cannot take him from us. Their rejection is predictable, and was predicted.

But it’s hard to see so many people around us reject the message of peace that we have in Christ. **Some are indifferent to the gospel, some outright hostile to the message that there is a God out there, let alone a God among us, that represses our own sinful desires and is Lord over our lives.** When our children fall away from the faith, we want to do anything we can to bring them back. And so we think that the problem is that the music isn’t catchy enough; or that our people aren’t welcoming enough; or that our church isn’t big enough; or that the Gospel that Jesus gives us to preach isn’t relevant enough. So when we spread the gospel and face rejection we blame it on all of the incidentals. It’s silly when we do it. It’s like trying to fix a house that’s falling apart by putting on a new coat of paint.

In sending out the 72, Jesus is foreshadowing his church. Jesus doesn’t spread his message with his own mouth, he sends ministers to do it and says, “**The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me.”** In other words, the one who hears **the church that speaks Jesus words** (from the bible), **hears Jesus**. And the one who **rejects the church that speaks Jesus’ words from the bible, rejects Jesus**. And the one who rejects Jesus rejects God.

Forget all of the 12 step programs to grow the church. Jesus says, go out and preach my gospel peace, and if a son of peace is there it will rest upon him; if not the peace you preach will return to you. **And if it returns to you, it is not a sign of a bad product, but of a stiff-necked person who resists the Holy Spirit.**..and no new church program will tenderize such a person into believing...the only prescribed treatment for such a condition is a preaching of the Law. **And so when that happens--when a town rejects those sent by God--they are to take the greatest vengeance that God can possibly take upon a fallen human being. To leave them**. "Even the dust from your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off as a judgment against you" and walk away. Those who reject the Gospel get the law in full measure.

Friends, this popular Christian notion of a *gentle* “love muffin” Jesus, doesn’t really fit the mould here. I don’t know where people get the idea that Jesus isn’t judgmental, and that he wouldn’t judge people, and that judging people is unchristian. For he says to the towns that reject those who carry his message, “**Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! You are supposed to be the people of God. And if the fantastic things that I’ve done for you through my sent ones had been done in gentile towns, they would have repented long ago.**  And so, since you reject my messengers you will be brought down to Hades.”

Today pastors have the same calling to the same ministry. Preach the word in season and out of season. **Perform the miracles of Baptism and Holy Communion in the stead and by the command of Jesus.** And liberate people from the bondage of sin, death and the devil by preaching the words of Jesus. **Not unconditional affirmation. Not self-esteem. Not winsome words that guide you to “your best life now.”** Preach the peace of Jesus and it is the same as if he preached it himself. For the same spirit is sent in those words, and if faith is to be created you can trust the Spirit to do so.

Now someone might say, “All Christians are equal. I can’t believe Jesus would select 'special Christians' to be ministers. The pastor is no more special than anyone else.” And that is true, and Jesus addresses that here today. Jesus created a position, an office, what we call “the office of the holy ministry, and that office is not held by each individual Christian. Jesus wanted to do that, and so he did. But this office doesn't give the minister a privileged status before God; and is no cause for boasting. In fact, when these 72 ministers return and say, “**Hey Jesus, this is great, even the demons turn tail and run from us in your name!**” And Jesus says, “Yeah it’s great alright. I have given you authority to tread on serpents and Satan’s got nothing on you because of this authority you have been given. Still, don’t get too cocky, don’t rejoice that I have given you authority; *rejoice instead that I have saved you*."

In the end, ladies and gentlemen, if you’re a pastor, or a teacher, or a farmer or a truck driver, you have only one thing to stand on. On the last day when you stand before the judgment throne of God, **the only thing you have to lean on is your baptism, that peace like a river that was poured over you BY one sent by Jesus THROUGH the ministry of his Church.** You sins are washed away; your debt to God forgiven. Rejoice in this! Rest on this. Because if you lean on anything else you will fall down to Hades. But like the ark of Noah, the waters of judgment will only serve to raise up those who rest upon their baptism. And the flood that drowns the dusty towns will not drown you, but wash you clean and exalt you to heaven in the day of the Lord.