

Multiply Jesus Followers (10/31/2015)

Manuscript

Text: Luke 10:1-20 (Page 708 in Cornerstone NIV Pew Bible)

¹After 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. ²He 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. ³Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. ⁴Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.

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

⁸“When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you. ⁹Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ ¹⁰But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, ¹¹‘Even the dust of your town we wipe from our feet as a warning to you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God has come near.’ ¹²I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.

¹³“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. ¹⁴But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. ¹⁵And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to the heavens? No, you will go down to Hades (the realm of the dead).

¹⁶“Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me; but whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me.”

¹⁷The seventy-two returned with joy and said, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.”

¹⁸He replied, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. ¹⁹I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. ²⁰However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

[Big Idea:

- ***Jesus***
 - ***prepares his followers,***
 - ***to spread the good news, and***
 - ***receive God's joy.]***

1 Introduction

On June 6, 1944, General Dwight Eisenhower, the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe issued the following “Order of the Day”. This message went out to everyone under his command. Listen to what he said to his troops:

Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Forces:

You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you. In company with our brave Allies and brothers-in-arms on other Fronts you will bring about the destruction of the German war machine, the elimination of Nazi tyranny over oppressed peoples of Europe, and security for ourselves in a free world.

Your task will not be an easy one. Your enemy is well trained, well equipped and battle-hardened. He will fight savagely.

But this is the year 1944. Much has happened since the Nazi triumphs of 1940-41...

(The United Nations have inflicted upon the Germans great defeats, in open battle, man-to-man. Our air offensive has seriously reduced their strength in the air and their capacity to wage war on the ground. Our Home Fronts have given us an overwhelming superiority in weapons and munitions of war, and placed at our disposal great reserves of trained fighting men.)

The tide has turned. The free men of the world are marching together to victory.

I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty, and skill in battle. We will accept nothing less than full victory.

Good Luck! And let us all beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking.

This order, on June 6 of 1944 launched the invasion of Normandy, France, which like most of Europe was occupied by Nazi Germany during World War II. Over 11,000 allied aircraft flew 14,000 missions, that day, bombing German defenses and transporting supplies and paratroopers onto the mainland. **Here is a picture** of some of those paratroopers. Over 6,000 sea vessels from the US, the UK, Canada and other nations helped deliver troops and supplies across the English Channel toward the beaches in France. **Look at them all**. Combined, by air and by ship, 156,000 troops were deployed into Europe on that day.

The battle was intense, especially on the Normandy beaches as the troops arrived ashore **by amphibious landing craft**. Can you just imagine how it was for those coming ashore? The price of victory was high. But it became the turning point for the US and its allies in World War II. It would take almost a year before Germany was defeated, but this mission really was the beginning of the march toward victory.

During World War 2, the mission was very clear, and everyone did their part, from the **bravest soldier on the front line**, to **the factory worker back home building equipment**

and supplies, to youth helping the war effort through **recycling** and even the youngest children **knitting clothes**. Everybody did his or her part for the mission.

You and I can get excited hearing the stories of brave men and women who took on dangerous missions at great risk, and ultimately achieved victory. But we need to realize that just like the soldiers under General Eisenhower's command, you and I are also given a mission. It is a mission from Jesus, and the stakes are much higher than they were in World War 2. Let's read about this mission again from today's text.

2 Body

We are reading from the gospel of Luke, chapter 10, starting at verse 1, where we see **Jesus prepares his followers** to go out on his mission.

2.1 Jesus prepares his followers (Luke 10:1-11)

Luke, chapter 10, verse 1, which is on page 708 if you are using one of the blue and white pew bibles.

2.1.1 Jesus appoints his followers to go (10:1-2)

¹After 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.

Just after chapter 9, where the gospel writer Luke tells us that Jesus told his followers that following him requires their all, their full devotion, he selects seventy-two "others" to go out ahead of him. Now some Bible translations have "seventy", and others have "seventy-two", and there are a lot of interesting reasons why there some differences in the copies of the ancient manuscripts of the Bible that give us some uncertainty as to which number is the actual number of these disciples. But it doesn't change the story either way. Whichever is the actual original number, the amount is important because it is much larger than then number of Jesus closest friends, the 12 apostles. Luke is comparing this group of 72 with those 12 apostles, who he sent on a previous mission at the beginning of chapter 9.

Now why would Jesus first send out his closest 12, and then send out the 72? It is not just his closest disciples that are sent. The mission is bigger than that. In fact, the number 72 is similar to the number of nations in the ancient world that are described in the Old Testament. It's almost like Jesus is painting a picture of sending his followers to the entire world.

Jesus sends his followers ahead of him to where he was about to go. And in the next verse he told them to specifically pray for more to go. Luke 10, verse 2:

²He 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.

Jesus is saying that there is a huge harvest, a huge job, and it is going to take so many workers that even the ones who he is sending now need to pray for more to follow. The harvest is ready. It is time to go.

Think about what happens if this pattern continues. 12 go first. Then 72 follow, but they need to pray for more to go. If more go, and if they also pray for more, then that means even more followers going, and even more are praying for more to follow. Eventually, it includes all of Jesus's followers.

Jesus appoints his followers to go. He appoints all of his of followers. If you are a Jesus followers, there is someone praying for you to go and make disciples. And Jesus wants you to go.

Now what is Jesus preparing them for? Let's continue in verse 3.

2.1.2 The mission appears dangerous (10:3)

³Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.

The next thing we learn is that **the mission that Jesus is sending us on seems dangerous**. It is not an easy mission.

Why would Jesus tell his followers that they were going out as lambs among wolves? That does not seem like a way to get lots of volunteers. Eisenhower warned his troops in the order of the day that the task wouldn't be easy; that the enemy was well trained; and that the enemy would fight savagely. This is not the typical way to encourage volunteers: telling them that it is going to be dangerous!

Eisenhower wanted his troops to know the dangers so they could be serious about counting the cost, their very lives. **Here is a photograph** of where he told them right to their face, the day before the invasion. His tenderness, honesty, and care for his troops were some of the reasons they loved him as their commander.

Jesus is our commander. He loves us, and is sending us into danger, with open eyes, because the mission is important.

How important is this mission? Well, let's keep reading...

2.1.3 We must be focused on the mission (10:4-8)

⁴Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; ...

Jesus tells us that we should not worry about a lot of details. What does this mean? If Jesus' followers were about to go into a neighboring town, shouldn't they bring their money bag so they can pay their expenses? Shouldn't they bring some extra shoes in case they have to walk farther than expected? Jesus says no. It is like he is saying we don't even have time to pack our suitcases. We don't have time to raise up all the finances we might need. The time is short. **We need to be focused on the mission** and just go.

Now I have to say that international travel is one of my most favorite things to do. I don't just like going. What I especially like is the planning ahead of time. How will we get from one place to another? Will we take a plane, or a train, or a bus, or a car, or the subway? I love making those sorts of plans.

But Jesus sends out his followers with no such plans. In fact, they are to travel with such focus that he says in the second half of verse 4:

⁴...and do not greet anyone on the road.

They are to be fully devoted to getting to their destination. No distractions. No side trips. Get there. It is urgent.

When I go traveling, I always make sure I know where I'll stay each night. What hotel reservations do I need to make in advance? But no so with the mission from Jesus:

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

When Jesus' followers get to the town, they should enter a house and see if it will provide them sanctuary. They are to bless the house with peace, and if there is peaceful person there who supports their mission, that is where they are supposed to stay. Once they find one, they should eat whatever is provided them. They don't need to be on the lookout for a softer bed, better meals, or nicer drinks somewhere else. Take the first house that will support you.

Can you imagine traveling like that? If I told Patt that that was the way we were going to travel on our first trip to Russia together, I think she would have had every right to say "Anthony, you are crazy!" But that is the way Jesus prepares his followers. He is saying the mission is so urgent, so pressing, that they just need to go and trust that God will supply them at each step.

Cornerstone is blessed to have many families who have participated in short-term missions trips. [Here are photos](#) from 3 of these trips.

We've had people like Jonathan and Monica, Hannah, Max, Stephanie, Micah, Amy Godfrey, and maybe some others who have gone to work at the Champfleuri camp in France. That's the photo from at the bottom. Raise your hand if you have been part of one of those trips to France. I've heard that you have had some amazing meals in France, and that unless you are a very fussy eater, it is quite easy to eat the food there.

Other families have been involved in short-term trips to Haiti. There is a photo of the most recent trip at the upper left. I think most of the Bradshaws have gone in the past, as well as Andrew and Amanda, and Diana. I know Ann and Alison went on the most recent trip. Any others? Raise your hands if you've been part of the Haiti trips. I have no idea what the food was like for you guys? Did you enjoy eating it?

Others in our church have been to help the weeklong youth camp Russia. This is a camp photo from a few years back at the upper right. All the Courtemanches have been one time or another, as well as Bill and Kayela. Amy McDonald has gone and even lived there. (I guess I can't call you McDonald anymore). Vitaly you don't count because you were born there. Anybody else? Raise your hand. What is your verdict on the food? Good? Bad?

Well the topic of eating on a foreign trip is always an interesting one, but, for Jesus' followers, the instruction is quite simple:

⁸"When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you.

Jesus is saying there should be no fussy eaters for those who are sent on his mission. God is going to supply what you need, down to the food. Just eat what is provided.

At this point, we might wonder why should we go on such a mission. There is so little planning and no luxuries. There are no planned accommodations. There is no real food selection. Doesn't this seem a bit harsh? Jesus said it would be dangerous. General Eisenhower thought his troops were prepared for their mission. But what about us? Are we ready to do what Jesus asks?

So far we've seen that **Jesus prepares his followers** to go out on his mission. That is the first point. He does this by appointing them to go and multiply disciples. He tells them that the mission appears dangerous, and they have to totally focus on accomplishing it, not worrying about traveling, what to bring, where to stay, or what to eat.

But what is this mission, really? That's the next part of today's message.

2.2 ...to spread the good news, (Luke 10:9-15)

Look at verses 9-15. We are going to see that this mission is part of God's plan for redemption, that is, **to spread the good news**.

2.2.1 The mission includes word and deed (10:9)

Starting at verse 9:

⁹Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'

This mission is same mission Jesus gave to the 12 apostles in the beginning of chapter 9. Back there it said Jesus "sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick". First it says: "Heal the sick who are there." This is doing the work that the disciples of Jesus' day saw him do as he went from town to town.

If you talk to the folks who have gone on the Haiti missions, they take the command to heal the sick quite literally. They send medical missionaries such as nurses and aides with medicine and supplies to provide direct care to sick Haitians who have limited access to medial care. Diana, you've done that, right?

Other trips by other teams to other places help with their hands in other ways. The teens and young adults on the Champfleuri team work with their hands to run the English-language youth camp in France with crafts, activities, sports, and practicing conversational English. Those of us who go to Russia do very similar things to help at the youth camp there. Very practical jobs, easy to do really, that meet very practical needs to make the summer camp a success for the kids. Working with hands to show love to others, Christian and non-Christian alike, and in so doing, fulfill the second half of Great Commandment from Matthew 22:39: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Christ commands us to love our neighbor. It might mean providing health care. It might mean digging wells. It might mean running a game of baseball for a group of kids who otherwise don't have anything to do. Whatever it is, Christ wants us to use our hands and meet the physical needs of the people we are trying to reach on our mission. And it doesn't have to be far away. It might just be what we did today in reaching families in our neighborhood, doing our best to be friendly with the trunk or treat.

But it is more than just deeds. Christ also says to tell them that the Kingdom of God has come near them. Luke records in chapter 17 that Jesus explained what the kingdom of God was to the religious experts of the day, the Pharisees. He told them the HE was the kingdom of God. Jesus is the King, and when he is present, the Kingdom is present.

Jesus has come. He is the risen savior king who has defeated death and offers us a rescue for our sins. When we go, wherever we go, we have to declare him, by name. We can't fulfill our assigned mission unless we also include words of good news. The gospel. Anything less is just merely work for social good. Good deeds are good. But they are not enough for this mission. It must also include good news that transforms lives. We call the gospel good news because it really is good news that brings peace. Isaiah 52:7 says it like this:

"How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!""

Peace with God, freedom from sin, or "salvation", is the best possible good news of all.

So, the mission includes word and deed. And using words to proclaim salvation is an essential part of the mission.

2.2.2 The mission has serious eternal consequences (10:10-15)

But besides healing and declaring the kingdom with words, we find out from Jesus that our mission has serious, eternal consequences. Let's continue reading at verse 10:

¹⁰But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, ¹¹'Even the dust of your town we wipe from our feet as a warning to you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God has come near.'

This is a hard message that speaks to the seriousness of our mission to multiply followers of Jesus. It says that if we go and are not welcomed, we are not to get

discouraged. We are supposed to tell them that the Kingdom came near, as it is true whether they accept it or not. That is the confidence that we are supposed to have in our message. But if it is rejected, we need to wipe the dust from our feet as a warning move on to the next assignment.

Jesus illustrates this in verses 12-15:

¹²I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.
¹³“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. ¹⁴But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. ¹⁵And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to the heavens? No, you will go down to Hades (*that is, the realm of the dead*).

Now many of you may have heard of the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. They were sinful cities during the days of Lot in some of the earliest part of the Old Testament. Sodom was destroyed by God in fire for unrepentant sin. **Here is what** the English painter John Martin thought it might have been like based on the description in the Bible. He painted this in 1852. Terrifying.

Jesus says that any one who rejects his followers, who rejects us, is rejecting him, and is in for similar treatment as Sodom. Total destruction.

The other cities that are mentioned, Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, are the towns around the Sea of Galilee, in the province of Galilee. These were cities near Jesus' home town of Nazareth, where he did many miracles. Despite his miracles, he was not honored as a prophet and deliverer there. Jesus says that outlying sea towns in modern-day Lebanon, that is, Tyre and Sidon, would do better than his own neighborhood at the judgment. He said this because his own neighborhood towns did not repent, even after seeing Jesus' miracles first hand.

Our message is serious, because the world's problem is very serious. Sin is the one-and-only cause of death in all of history. Death, both physical and spiritual, is God's judgment on mankind's rebellion. It is a real problem that needs a real solution.

Some of you know that our family had to put down our dog Bailey two weeks ago, because she was dying of cancer. Patt, Max, and I were with her when she passed, and we all around her, crying, holding her, as she took her last breath and her heart stopped. It was awful. But it reminded me how awful death is. And death illustrates how awful sin is. It wasn't meant to be this way. Creation wasn't meant to experience death. You know that in your heart whenever you grieve over loss. Sin ruined everything, because sin rejects the life-giving Triune God who put all of it in motion. Sin leads to judgment and death. But the message of Christ is that there is a way to overcome that judgment, to overcome death, because of Christ's perfect work on the cross on our behalf.

This is a heavy message, and a serious mission. **The mission includes word and deed. And the mission and has eternal consequences.** But it is good news for whoever will accept it, because Jesus is the solution to everyone's sin.

So to recap, we see that Jesus:

- **prepares his followers,**
- **to spread the good news**

2.3 ...And receive God's joy (Luke 10:16-20)

But there is more to this mission than just preparation and action. The surprising thing about the mission is the result it has in those who are sent on it. Jesus also sends us **to receive God's joy.**

2.3.1 Jesus gives us authority and power for this mission (10:16, 19)

First, let's look at verse 16 of chapter 10:

¹⁶“Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me; but whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me.”

Jesus says something remarkable here. He is saying that when you or I are sent to multiply disciples, we are acting in his authority. We are like Christ's representatives.

This is amazing. This is far beyond what the Allied troops could do when they were sent on their mission to liberate Europe. General Eisenhower's troops couldn't speak on his behalf. But that doesn't seem to be the case with us in Jesus' mission. When we are sent, we are truly acting on Christ's behalf. Those who accept us are accepting Jesus. Those who reject us are rejecting Jesus. We are true representatives.

But it is more than that. If you skip ahead to verse 19, Jesus says:

¹⁹I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.

Jesus says that when we are sent, we have authority to overcome the power of the enemy. He says that nothing will harm us. He is saying that we have invincible power.

Now this is something that Eisenhower could not do for his troops. He knew that his troops were not invincible, and that there would be casualties. Even though 156,000 troops made it into Europe as part of that mission, 4,000 died in the first day, with another 6,000 wounded. And that was just the first day.

Jesus says it is different for us. He has key information that no earthly commander has ever had. He says that nothing will harm us. Somehow he knows that. Can you believe this? If it is true, then it changes everything about the way we go.

Jesus gives us authority and power for this mission. That's a relief. But there is more.

2.3.2 We experience earthly joy in seeing results (10:17)

Verse 17:

¹⁷The seventy-two returned with joy and said, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.”

The people who returned from the mission came back in joy. They were happy because they saw God working through them to do amazing things.

When Eisenhower’s troops meet up with the Soviet troops at the Elbe River on April 25th, 1945, almost a year after the invasion on Normandy, the soldiers were very happy, **as you can see in this historic handshake picture**. The Americans are on the left, and the Soviets on the right. Together they were trying to defeat Germany. The Western Allies came from the west, and the Soviet Army came from the east. Together, they had successfully divided Nazi Germany in two pieces, north and south. At that point, everyone knew that the fall of Germany, and the end of the war, was imminent. In fact, Germany’s total surrender was signed two weeks later.

The joy of military victories is one thing. But victories in God’s kingdom have their own unique joy. People who come back from short-term missions have amazing of what God has done. Ask any of the people who raised their hands to tell you about it. **Look at the smiles of our missionaries in France. Or in Haiti. Or in Russia.** It is awesome. There is such joy in being used by God.

But you don’t have to go far for this joy. Last Monday the Church Plan Ministry Team (CPMT) spent our devotion time before our meeting recounting the story of how Cornerstone came to be. And by the end of it, we were grinning with joy also, because like those 72 who returned, we were just amazed to have seen God working. God is so good and merciful to us.

The text says joy. Because it is really joyful. **We experience earthly joy in seeing results.**

2.3.3 The outcome of the mission is not in doubt (10:18)

As we continue, we find out the answer to the question of how commander Jesus knows that nothing is going to hurt us. This information completely changes how we see the work. Verse 18:

¹⁸He replied, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.

Now this is an amazing thing. Jesus says that he has already seen the defeat of Satan. The outcome of the mission was never in doubt. He already has seen the enemy defeated.

General Eisenhower was a bit of a worrier, and one of the backup plans that he had to prepare was what to do if the invasion failed. He wrote a famous speech called the “In case of failure message”, where he takes responsibility for having to withdraw the troops. If you haven’t done so already, you should read it. People say it is one of the best speeches ever written. Fortunately it never had to be delivered. General Eisenhower had doubts whether the D-Day mission would succeed, and so he had to be prepared in case the mission failed.

But not so with our God! Jesus says **the outcome of the mission is not in doubt**. Not at all. He has already seen the defeat of Satan. The mission is part of God's certain plan for redemption. It is already over. We just have to mop up.

This is good news. It is much less scary than we first thought.

But, there is one final word from our Commander in Chief.

2.3.4 Jesus commands us to focus on the permanent joy of what this mission is all about (10:20)

Verse 20:

²⁰However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

This is the amazing part. Jesus wants us to focus not just on the temporary joys we experience while on the mission. **Jesus commands to focus on the permanent joy of what this mission is all about**. Because of Christ, we are saved from destruction, and our names are written in heaven. No one or no thing can ever erase them. Christ gained the complete victory on the cross, and it secured for us a relationship with God through Christ's perfect life lived on our behalf. God sees Jesus and his perfect righteousness when he looks at us.

This is the good news of what this mission is all about. Jesus wants us **to receive God's joy**. And that is why we are commanded to go out and spread it to others, so they can have joy also. This is not a mission of military conquest. It is a mission of spreading joy. It is the best news ever.

3 Conclusion

Do you feel called to God's mission to rescue the world and spread joy? Or do you feel unprepared? Do you not know what you are supposed to do? Or do you know what to do, but you don't want to do it? Maybe you are afraid to do it?

I'll ask Aaron to put it up for us one last time. Today's message for us is that:

Jesus:

- prepares his followers
- to spread the good news, and
- receive God's joy

This is not a sad or scary thing. This is a mission of joy.

If there is something holding you back from the mission, I want you to do the following:

1. Identify the target.

Has God laid on your heart where to go? It could be to go on a short term missions trip to a far away place. But it could be very close. Down the street. In your neighborhood.

At your workplace. Among your friends. Among your family. Has God spoken to you about someone you are supposed to reach? Who is it?

2. Name the obstacle:

Next, what is the biggest obstacle you have today? What is holding you back? It might be:

- Fear.
- Lack of knowledge.
- Your own guilt of sin.
- Time.
- Lack of unbelievers in your life.
- No opportunity to say or do something that you think would make a difference.

Whatever it is, name it, right now.

I need to hear this as much as you right now. There is someone I should be sharing Jesus with, and I'm letting the opportunity get past me, because I have all kinds of excuses. Is it the same with you?

3. Pray.

Besides identifying the target and naming the obstacle, the third thing I want you to pray. Jesus commanded his disciples to ask the Lord of the harvest to send workers into the harvest. Let's do that. Pray about your specific person or place where you should be spreading the good news, and the obstacle that is holding you back, and ask God to knock it down, this week. Maybe YOU are the worker he wants to send to a particular battleground. Maybe this week is your D-Day.

4. Reflect:

Now in addition to identifying your target, naming your obstacle, and praying, I want you to reflect. Make an appointment with God to meet him in his word this week to reflect on this passage. Most of you have smart phones with calendars in them, or a bulletin to write on. Pick a day, Monday or Tuesday or some other day, and schedule that appointment to read these 20 verses from Luke 10 again this week and to talk to God again specifically about the person or place that God has laid on your heart, and the obstacle that is holding you back. Go ahead, put it in your calendar.

Jesus:

- prepares his followers,
- to spread the good news, and
- receive God's joy

Cornerstone, we are called on this mission. We all have a part. The tide has turned. We are marching on toward victory.

[Vs 3: "Go!" This is Jesus talking. He is speaking to us. "Go!"]

God's joy is waiting for us. Christ has done all the hard work for us already. And he wants to do for others what he has done for us. He wants us to respond to the joy of our salvation by obeying him as our commander in chief and going out as his troops to multiply followers of Jesus. And to receive joy.

Pray with me as we prepare to respond to God's word in song.

4 Prayer of Response and Blessing over the Offering

"Father: Your word to us is awesome. It speaks right into our hearts. Lord, I pray for all of us, especially myself, that you would free us up to obey your command to go on the mission to spread the good news. Help us recognize how you have fully prepared us to spread the gospel to some special person or place that you've laid upon our hearts. Perhaps it is someone or someplace far away, or perhaps it is somewhere right near to us.

Lord, if there is something holding us back, would you, in your awesome power, knock over that obstacle this week? Would you help us to see the victory in Christ that is already won? Would you give us courage and boldness to speak good news to lost people that need a rescue from sin?

Please do something amazing in our community that would clearly show us your mighty hand. Father, you command us to share in Jesus' victory. Satan has been defeated. There is good news for the lost. Christ has conquered death. Give us strong hands to share the gospel both in actions and in words. Make our church into a place where lost sinners find rescue in Christ.

As we respond in prayer and song, we give our all to you, including the things we might hold most dear, our finances. Give us generous hearts to share what we have that the gospel might more clearly be proclaimed in this community, and that lives would be changed through the message of Jesus. It is in his name we pray, Amen."

5 Benediction

1 Corinthians 15:58: My dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

1 Corinthians 16:23: The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.