

The Gospel According to Luke

“The Magnificent 70”

Chapter 10:1-24

Introduction

Success is measured differently, depending on the endeavor:

1. In business, success can be measured by the bottom-line of your financial statement. You're either profitable, or you're not.
2. In education, success can be measured by your performance on certain standardized tests.
3. In the military, success can be measured by whether or not you've achieved your strategic objective.

The measures of success are different; but they are usually something quantifiable: More money, higher test scores, the acquisition of territory.

These concepts are good so far as the world is concerned. You want to see **results**, and you want to gain more **resources**. What about in the Church? Are results and resources the true measure of success?

We sometimes act as though these are the measure of spiritual success. If we have more money, more people, more land, bigger buildings – then we *must* be successful.

The seventy disciples Jesus sent out thought they were successful because they could point to quantifiable results:

Luke 10:17 Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.”

They based their success on something they did, on the results of their ministry among the people. They had **joy** because of what they accomplished.

Jesus had a different perspective entirely on spiritual success. Though thrilled that His disciples were delivering people from demons and disease, He knew that the results of their ministry were not the true and abiding source of joy. He said,

Luke 10:20 “Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.”

It wasn't the *results* that brought abiding joy; and Jesus will go on to say that it isn't *resources*.

Joy comes from your relationship with the Lord, separate from the results of your ministry. Rejoicing comes from the revelation of Jesus, apart from your resources.

We'll organize our thoughts around two points: #1 Joy In Serving Comes From Your Relationship With Jesus, *Not* From The Results, and #2 Rejoicing In Your Spirit Comes From The Revelation Of Jesus, *Not* From Resources.

#1 Joy In Serving Comes From Your Relationship With Jesus,
Not From The Results
(v1-20)

If spiritual success is measured by results... *Then guys like the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah were dismal failures!* In His instructions to the seventy disciples, Jesus indicated that they might not be received. He hoped for their reception, but anticipated their rejection.

Ministry is measured *not* by results, but by personal faithfulness. If your faithful ministry is received, that's great. If it is rejected... That's not so great for those who reject it, but you can still have joy in your relationship with Jesus.

Jesus proposed a short-term mission:

Luke 10:1 After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go.

Why *seventy*? One possibility is that, in the table of nations found in

Genesis Chapter Ten, there are seventy nations listed. Jesus had twelve apostles, representing His desire to reach Israel with her twelve tribes; and He had seventy disciples, representing His desire to reach the rest of the world. **God so loved the world...**

Luke 10:2 Then He said to them, “The harvest truly *is* great, but the laborers *are* few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.

It is an illustration. The word for **harvest** is for a particular phase of harvesting, of the late **harvest**, which needs to be brought in quickly before the crop spoils. It's a matter of urgency that the **laborers** get out into the fields. The reapers seem in no hurry, so news is brought to the foreman, called the **Lord of the harvest**. The idea is that he will exhort them to get out into the fields before it's too late.

This is interesting, because it is not really asking so much for more laborers, as it is urging those who are **already** laborers to renew and redouble their efforts before it was too late!

It's OK to pray that the Lord would raise-up more people to serve. But don't get sidetracked, thinking more people are always necessary. What is necessary is for those already serving to serve with a sense of urgency.

Luke 10:3 Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves.

Sometimes, the ministry is like being a shepherd among sheep. Other times, it's like being a **lamb** among **wolves**. **Lambs** don't usually fare too well among **wolves**! It is a potent picture to describe the *dangers* and *difficulties* of the ministry.

Luke 10:4 Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals; and greet no one along the road.

The first illustration was the laborer; this is another illustration, that of a messenger. Think of the Pony Express riders! Travel light; don't stop for chit-chat along the way. It's not to be rude, but to again emphasize the urgency of the mission.

Luke 10:5 But whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house.'

Luke 10:6 And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on it; if not, it will return to you.

Luke 10:7 And remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not go from house to house.

Luke 10:8 Whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you.

They were to be content with whatever hospitality was shown to them. Some may be entertained by the wealthy; some, by the poor. They were not to measure their ministry by the status of the home, or seek to better their situation. In other words, your outward trappings are no measure of success.

Messengers must have a message:

Luke 10:9 And heal the sick there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'

The **healings** were to substantiate the message. The message of **the kingdom** meant, to a Jew, that the Messiah had arrived, and thus they should receive Him.

Notice the simplicity of the message. The message was a straightforward statement of the biblical facts, emphasizing Jesus.

The seventy would not necessarily be received:

Luke 10:10 But whatever city you enter, and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say,

Luke 10:11 'The very dust of your city which clings to us we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near you.'

They could be faithful to their mission, and to the message, but still be rejected. Rejection is **not** failure.

Luke 10:12 But I say to you that it will be more tolerable in that Day for Sodom than for that city.

Luke 10:13 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.

Luke 10:14 But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you.

Luke 10:15 And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades.

Luke 10:16 He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me.”

That Day is a reference to a time of judgment coming upon the earth. It anticipates that the Jews would ultimately reject Jesus and His offer of the kingdom.

Some people scoff at the idea that Judgment Day is coming. Jesus mentioned three ancient cities which God supernaturally judged, then compared them to three contemporary cities. God has judged in the past; He still judges today; He will judge in the future.

Luke 10:17 Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.”

Not only did they **heal the sick**; **demons** were defeated, and people delivered. They could point to the quantifiable results and claim success; and it was the basis of their **joy**.

Jesus wanted to give them the right perspective:

Luke 10:18 And He said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.

Luke 10:19 Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

Jesus statement about Satan’s fall is an entire theology of the devil! It looks back to **Satan**’s being cast-out of **heaven**, before he tempted Adam and Eve, and covers his continued falling throughout human history, until finally, in the Revelation of Jesus Christ, he is described as being cast down to the earth, then into the bottomless pit, then finally into the Lake of Fire for all eternity. The point here is that it was Jesus Who gave the seventy the authority over Satan and demons.

Jesus then made the major point:

Luke 10:20 Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.”

It wasn't the *result* they should be excited about, but their **relationship** to Jesus! Not the gift of exorcism, but the Giver.

There is, in **heaven**, a book called The Lamb's Book of Life. The names of all saved individuals are **written** there. How they get there is a study for another time! I (personally) believe all the living have their names written there from conception; those who die having rejected Jesus have their names **blotted out**. But let's not get off-track...

There is a very simple, but enormously important, point to all this. We've made it already, but want to re-emphasize it. Results are not the reason you have joy serving the Lord. You have joy serving Jesus despite the outward results **because it is Jesus you serve!** Your relationship itself, apart from external measurements of success, is your constant source of joy.

#2 Rejoicing In Your Spirit Comes From The Revelation Of Jesus, Not From Resources (v21-24)

Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem, to be crucified. His apostles and disciples still did not understand what was happening. Jesus is described as **rejoicing in His spirit**. He had a deep, settled, joy that could not be quenched or restrained.

I want some of that! And God wants us all to have it – to have a rejoicing spirit. There is a clue in Jesus' prayer as to how we can rejoice in our spirit. It is because of the revelation God gives to us.

Luke 10:21 In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the wise and prudent* and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.

Jesus breaks-out into spontaneous prayer, right in front of His disciples. We should do it more ourselves.

The **wise and the prudent**, in this instance, refers to unbelievers. Wisdom and prudence summarize the resources of this world. Wisdom describes intangible resources, like education. Prudence

describes tangible resources; people who are prudent are good with money and property, with the accumulation of wealth.

The **wise** are folks who value, and pursue, the world's wisdom; the **prudent** are folks who value, and pursue, the world's wealth. They think they are mature compared to believers, because believers act more like **babes** who trust that their Dad will take care of them.

It's not wrong to be wise and prudent with the resources of the world. **But you don't need them to rejoice!** Nothing you can obtain in the world can ever compare with the simple knowledge of Jesus, gained by God revealing Himself to you.

People get troubled over this phrase, that God has **hidden these things**. They think God hides Himself from certain people, only revealing Himself to a select few. That cannot be true, because Jesus once said (concerning His crucifixion), **"And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself"** (John 12:32).

It's really very simple. People who value and pursue the resources of this world are distracted by this world. They are busy piling-up wisdom and wealth for themselves on earth, and so they miss the revelation of God all around them. They drown-out their sense of spiritual emptiness by convincing themselves that the next plateau of worldliness, once achieved, will satisfy them.

Jesus breaks-off from praying to address everyone who was following Him:

Luke 10:22 All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and *the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.*"

One author commented on this verse by saying, "only God can reveal God." If you want to know God, to see God, to hear God, to touch God... He has been revealed in the Person and work of Jesus Christ, and in no one else.

To whom does Jesus **will to reveal God**? **The whole world of lost mankind!** For God so loved the world; God is not willing that any should perish...

Luke 10:23 Then He turned to *His* disciples and said privately, “**Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see;**

Luke 10:24 **for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not seen *it*, and to hear what you hear, and have not heard *it*.”**

Privately Jesus told His disciples that they were privileged to **see** and **hear** Him and His works. Revelation, *not* resources, is the true source of rejoicing.

It should be obvious that resources are not the basis for rejoicing; but it's not. We still describe people and Churches as being blessed based upon quantifiable growth – in numbers of people, in the amount of offering, in the size of the building.

Jesus said you were blessed simply because He revealed God to you. It's a spiritual transaction, that takes place in your spirit. If you begin to look at your physical resources, you're never going to be able to rejoice.

Conclusion

Spiritual success cannot be measured by any worldly standard. God wants us to have joy serving Him, and to always rejoice in Him.

There is too much emphasis on externals, and it takes away from your joy and rejoicing. Instead, you are to enjoy your relationship with God right where you find yourself.

