

(George Huttar tells the story of Luke 10:1-12, 17-20)

Imagine that we were that crowd of 70 disciples who were gathered around Jesus that day. Imagine how it would have been to be sent out by Him

- Taking no purse nor luggage
- No hotel reservation, not even a tent, but staying in people's homes, eating their food
- No lollygagging along the way
- But bringing good news—"the kingdom of God has come near"
- You heal the sick and offer God's peace

You are on a mission for Jesus to towns in the area – to Duncanville, DeSoto, Cedar Hill, and Midlothian – to prepare the way for His presence.

The good news is you don't have to go alone; you are sent with a buddy.

The bad news is Jesus says, "I am sending you like lambs in the midst of wolves."

Are you feeling excited about Jesus' mission? Are you anticipating success? What kind of recruiting is that, Jesus? No wonder we hesitate to share our faith!

But Jesus said, "This is a great mission. The fields are ripe for harvest. And I am giving you power." From the beginning of His ministry to now Jesus' mission is to send out workers, people like you and me, to talk to others who do not know about Jesus. That's our mission at FPCD - *Connecting with God and sharing the good news of Jesus Christ.*

Now these 70 followers of Jesus were just like us - so enamored with Jesus, so thrilled to belong to Him, so stunned by His grace that they were saying things to him like "I will follow you wherever you go."

You have that same attitude. I have been here 2½ years and have heard you say, "Times have been tough the last few years but we know we are here for a reason." Indeed, *you are here for a reason.*

Jesus has set you apart, just like the 70.

Jesus has a call on your lives and your responsibility is to live into that call. He has sustained you for a purpose, and **the call is now.**

These 70 believers were closely connected with Jesus and nurtured by Him. Their experience was very similar to yours. Many of you met Jesus Christ right here – in this congregation, and you came to faith. **Jesus reigns, you see, whether it was on earth in person, or whether it's on earth now, present by His Spirit.**

Some of you got married in this room. You baptized your children and came to Sunday school. You worshiped together, prayed for the sick and made sandwiches for the homeless. You cried together in times of struggles and studied the Bible. Many of you grew up here as children and some have now been buried. You are here because all that mattered.

You learned to know Jesus personally in this place.

This church isn't just a club that you belong to. It's not just you being nice to one another. Something extraordinary happens here because Jesus Christ Himself is here in your midst. It's His presence you experience, His mercy that touches you; His grace that challenges you to risk praying when you are sick. Jesus causes you to love each other, even when you disagree. Something happens in this place that is miraculous. Jesus Christ reigns here.

He is fully present, just as present as He was for those 70.

He makes us His partners, just as he made them His partners, sending us out with His good news, the news that

- God is here with us!
- God gives us hope when there seems to be no hope
- God sets us free from all kinds of things that enslave us
- There is peace with God through His Savior, Jesus Christ

Right before Jesus went to heaven, the first believers stood on a hill with Him and He said this:

*"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere-- in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."* After saying this, he was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see him. (Acts 1:8-9)

There they stood looking at one another as if to say, "Now what?" And they remembered. They thought back to the time He sent them out.

And they thought about the magnificence of living with Him, of His healing people through them, and telling the good news. The thought of the triumph of watching others believe. They said,

*"Lord, even the demons submit to us!"*

Those demons were the lies of unbelief, Satan's lie that God doesn't exist and is not powerful; that God is not willing to work in your life. The reality of Jesus' power and presence overcomes all such spiritual opposition. And so we too, in this very place have experienced our own demons of unbelief being overcome – by worshipping and loving God, and loving one another.

We have experienced the very same thrilling hope as they had.

**And if it had not been for them taking His message to heart, if they had not told the story, we would not know.**

In the same way, if we do not tell this story; if we do not reach out to the young in this neighborhood – future generations will not know; will not have that hope.

First Presbyterian Church Duncanville exists because those 70 people told their story. Those 70 became 100 who reached out to 200 who witnessed to 500, and on it went. Through their witness God's voice is heard, although we may at times struggle to listen to His voice and let it change us. **But change us it will, and bless us, it does.**

We must engage this message for others, because God's promises make all the difference. Are you willing to share it, to fulfill your call?

Let's begin this study of Acts by putting first things first. You have been sent on a mission to tell the story of the Lord, whom you have experienced here. See, it's listed right in your bulletin. Open it and look at the bottom right, at the large word in bold – "SENDING" – He's sending you! It is not future tense, not past tense but present continuous action.

You are the partnership that brings God's promise to future generations.

AMEN