



Central Peninsula Church

Catalog No. 1268-30

Luke 10:1-24

Mark Mitchell

August 7, 2005

The Cure for Boredom

SERIES: *A Savior for All People*

As we start this morning, I want you to do something for me. Take out a piece of paper and a pen and write down five things you have to do this week. When you're finished I want you to look that over. How many of you can actually say, "Man, I can't wait to do that! I can't wait to jump right in"?

Isn't it amazing, when we really think about it, that we seldom live with a sense of excitement and passion and even joy? So few people really live with a sense of mission. So few can look at a list like that and say, "That's what I was created for." Maybe that's why one of the biggest problem among Christians today is boredom. When we lack a sense that God has an assignment for us, that we're on a mission for him, we get bored. That's why so often we fill our lives with junk. That's why we fall into materialism. That's why we fall into sin. We're born to live with a sense of passion and excitement, so when we lack those things we begin to look for them in all the wrong stuff. Proverbs says, "**The backslider gets bored with himself; the godly man's life is exciting**" (Proverbs 14:14 LB). Where does that excitement come from? Eph. 2:10 says, "**We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which he prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.**" That means we never have to be bored. Every day is exciting. Every day we're on a mission. Every day we can live with passion and joy.

This morning we come to a passage in the gospel of Luke which spells out for us what that really looks like. It teaches us more about how to become a part of what God is doing. Remember that last week we saw Jesus begin his long journey to Jerusalem. As he heads in that direction, he keeps telling people to follow him. Even when they have good excuses for staying behind, he keeps saying, "Follow me." And then, in chapter 10, Jesus does something that I don't think any of them expected.

I. The Seventy are sent out (vv. 1-16)

A. God doesn't limit ministry to a select few: Look what happens. "Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come." (v. 1). If this sounds familiar to you, it's because at the beginning of chapter nine, he sent out the Twelve in

similar fashion. Here he takes seventy others and sends them two by two into every city he himself planned to visit. Sending them "two by two" was for mutual support and companionship. The number of seventy is significant because it parallels the number of nations thought to exist in the world. The number twelve suggests the nation Israel, while the number seventy suggests the whole world. By sending out seventy, Jesus is making a statement that his message is not just for the Jews but for everyone.

I can just imagine what a shock this must have been to these seventy people. Up until now they had basically been spectators. They had followed Jesus but stayed on the sidelines and enjoyed the show as he preached and healed. They weren't that surprised when he sent out the Twelve. I mean, they were headed for the ministry. They needed training. But now he turns to them and says, "Now it's your turn!" Some of them probably said, "Well, I'm not really a very good speaker. I don't do the up-front thing very well." Another said, "Well, I don't really know your word well enough. I still have a lot of questions." Someone else said, "I've got a business to get back to. I'm just here for the weekend." But, you see, God doesn't limit ministry to a select few, but sends us all out into the harvest. This is one of the things that makes life exciting; this sense that we've been sent out by the Lord himself. It's not just for the Twelve; it's not just for the pastors and missionaries. If you're a follower of Jesus, you're on a mission. You're a sent one.

B. God is responsible for the success of our ministry. And the great thing about that is that God is responsible for the success of your mission. Look at verse 2. "**And He was saying to them, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.'**" (v. 2). You have to try picture this in your mind's eye. Jesus says the harvest is plentiful. Picture a vast cornfield with tall stalks of corn reaching up to the sky. They're ready to be picked. What happens if corn that is ready to be picked stays on the stalk? Does anybody know? I'm no farmer, but I've been told that it gets hard. So it's very important to have enough workers to get all the corn picked; otherwise it will go to waste. Jesus says to the Seventy that it's the same way with the world. There are a lot of people out there ready to be harvested for the

kingdom. We just need more and more workers to get out there before it's too late.

So what do you do? Do you post a "help wanted" sign in the town square? Do you place an add in the paper and offer a signing bonus? No, he says you to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers. I'm convinced that part of what they were praying for was the success of their mission, because if their mission was successful they would have more workers to send out. But who is responsible for the success of their ministry? God is. He's the one who has prepared people. Did you know that as you go about your day, you rub shoulders with people who God has prepared to hear the message about Jesus? Have you thought about that? Not only that, he is the Lord of the harvest! He's in charge of the whole operation! That's why we're told to beseech him to raise up more workers. It's not up to us; it's up to him. Our job is to just to show up.

Let me put it this way. Why are YOU here this morning? Most of you are here because someone showed up in your life. Someone showed up and cared enough about you to invite you to church or to share the Lord with you. And you responded because the Lord had prepared you.

In our staff meeting this week we had the Albanian couple featured in your bulletin with us. Berti shared with us how he was raised under communism and taught that all religion was only for weak and ignorant people. He went off the university to study math. One day he bumped into an American who was looking for a particular bank. Berti showed him where it was and then the guy took him out for coffee. During their conversation, the guy asked Berti what he thought about God. Berti told him that he didn't really believe in God. Then the guy told him about his faith in Christ. In the middle of the conversation, Berti stopped him and asked him if he'd ever been to college. The guy said he was a college graduate. Berti was stunned. That answer blew apart his whole world view. He realized there were intelligent, well-educated people in the world who believed in God. He never saw that man again, but a seed was planted that day which eventuated in him becoming a follower of Christ. When I heard that story, I thought, I'm so thankful for that guy. I'm so thankful that he was willing to bring up the awkward subject of God with Berti. God puts guys like Berti in our path all the time. Are we ready?

C. God's workers are to be totally dependent on him. Now Jesus wants these Seventy

people to be prepared so he goes on and gives them some very specific instructions . **"Go; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. Carry no money belt, no bag, no shoes; and greet no one on the way. Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house.' If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house. Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you; and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet we wipe off in protest against you; yet be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near.'" (vv. 3-11).** There's a lot here to swallow, but all of this communicates one very important thing: God's workers are to be totally dependent on him to protect and provide for them. He says we're sent out as sheep in the midst of wolves. That's encouraging! Sheep are completely defenseless. You send them out into a pack of wolves and they're dead meat -- unless they have one thing: a shepherd. Jesus said once, "I'm the good shepherd. I know my sheep. I call them by name and they hear my voice and they follow me." So we're dependent on him for protection.

We're also dependent on him for provision. He explicitly says NOT to take anything with them -- no money belt, bag or shoes. Why? I mean, why not be prepared? Because he wanted them to be in a position where God had to come through for them. Have you ever been in that position? Where if God doesn't come through, you're sunk? That's why he tells them to go to a house, offer them a greeting of peace, and if they respond with peace, and open their home to you, stay with them and eat and drink what they put in front of you. By the way, that would have been hard for Jews who very well may have been served food that was considered unclean! Jesus says, "Don't worry about that. That's God's provision. And the laborer is worthy of his wages. Heal the sick; tell them about the kingdom. You provide spiritual food for them; they provide physical food for you. And if they don't receive you, shake the dust off your feet as sign that they've rejected the offer of the kingdom."

There is a sense of urgency in all of this, isn't there? That's why he Doesn't want them weighted down. That's why in verse 4 he said not to even greet anyone on the way. Back then, greetings took a long time. It wasn't like today when we see someone and say, "Hey, how are you," and just keep on going. We don't expect an answer! Back then you had to stop. You had to go through a whole ritual and engage in chitchat. Jesus says you don't have time for that. There is a sense of urgency.

D. God's judgment on those with the privilege of hearing: The reason for such urgency is found in the next few verses. **"I say to you, it will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city. Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had been performed in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will be brought down to Hades! The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me."** (vv. 12-16). We know what happened to Sodom, but Jesus says it will be worse for that city that rejects your message. Here is where the "Woes" come in. When Jesus says "woe", he's not riding a horse. He's saying, "Something awful is about to happen to you." Jesus was serious about judgment. When he talks about "that day" in verse 12, he's talking about judgment day. Notice that the cities where Jesus had done most of his ministry are the ones in the most danger on that day. But the far-off Gentile cities of Tyre and Sidon, where he hadn't even been, will have an easier time. Why? Because God's judgment will be most severe on those with the privilege of hearing. Jesus is saying, "I gave you every opportunity. You were privileged to hear me preach and see me perform miracles, but you still rejected my message. Woe to you." The same thing holds true for those who hear the message from one of his disciples. In verse 16 he says, the one who listens to you listens to me and the one who rejects you rejects me. You can't separate Jesus from the ones who bear his message.

We want to be so patient with people. We want them to know that God loves them and we don't want to scare people into embracing Jesus. But it's possible, in all of our desire not to come on too strong and turn people off, that we fail to understand what's at stake, and we fail to communicate that you can't keep resisting the message forever and get away with it. We take for granted that there will be a tomorrow and a next day for us to make a decision, so we put it off. We want to be 100% certain before we cross that line of faith and say "Yes, I want to give my life to Christ. I want to follow him." I was so touched by Vitaly's words when he reflected on his parents and his brother's fate. He said, "I know they're better off now. I know they're in heaven." That's not a vague wish. That's a certainty based on the promise of God. He knew where his parents and his brother stood with Christ. For some of you, it's time to make a decision. God has sent friends and loved ones into your life. They've shared with you how Christ died for your sins and how he was raised up three days later to give you the hope of life beyond the grave. They've shared with you that all you have to do is turn away from your sins and place your trust in Christ as your Savior. But you keep putting it off. When "that day"

arrives for you, will he say, "I gave you every opportunity. I spared your life more than times than you know. But you kept saying, 'Not today. Maybe tomorrow. Maybe after I get married, or maybe after I get kids, or maybe after I get more time.'" Jesus says, "Woe to you. Don't be a fool! The time is now!" We live in a land where the message of the gospel can be found in churches, in bookstores, on the TV, on the radio and on the web. It's not like that everywhere. It's not like that in Turkey or in China. I wonder if one day Jesus will say, "Woe to you, Americans..." Why? Because God's judgment will be most severe on those who had the privilege of hearing.

Now in the case of the seventy who returned after their mission trip, they were ecstatic about the results. Talk about joy and purpose and passion. We don't know how long it was before they all met up with Jesus again, but Luke records what happened at their meeting.

II. The Seventy re-gather with joy vv. 17-24

A. Successful ministry brings joy: Look at vv. 17-19. **"The seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even (A)the demons are subject to us in Your name.' And He said to them, 'I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning. Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you.'**" (vv. 17-19).You can see that there is a lot of joy here. The Seventy come back and say, "Man, Jesus, it was great! You should have seen us. Demons fled when we spoke your name!" And Jesus is excited too. He sees in their ministry the downfall of Satan. In his name they have authority over serpents and scorpions -- these are symbolic of the power of the enemy. Jesus says, "None of that can injure you." We see here that successful ministry brings joy as the enemy is defeated by us in the name of Jesus. Remember that these are just ordinary people. Have you ever had an experience where God did something through you to impact someone else's life? You just kind of stood back for a minute and thought, "The God of the universe just used me." That's a great feeling.

B. Our chief joy should be in our salvation. But we have to be careful, because sometimes that success can be intoxicating. Look what Jesus says next. **"Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven."** (v. 20). Jesus is not saying that it's wrong to rejoice when we God uses us to defeat the enemy, but he's saying that we should be careful NOT to make that our chief source of joy. Our

chief source of joy should be over the fact that our name is recorded in heaven. The book of Revelation talks about this thing called “the Lamb’s Book of Life.” In that book are written all the names of the people who are going to heaven. What if I had that book in my hands right now? You want me to start reading from it. What if I did, and I started to read names and most of them you had never heard of, but then what if I read your name? (Say name). What would you do? You would be filled with joy! Nothing else would matter, including that you’re married to that guy next to you!

Do you know what’s great? I don’t have to have that book in my hands to know that my name is in it. 1 John 5:13 says, “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life.” It doesn’t say, “that you might hope or think you have eternal life,” but that you might know. There is no greater source of joy than that. You were dead but he made you alive. You were under condemnation but he justified you. You were dirty but he made you clean. You were headed for an eternity in hell, but he gave you eternal life with him. By that way, that word “rejoice” is what Greek scholars called a present imperative, which means it’s a command that we’re to continue in. We’re to keep rejoicing in our salvation. When people look at your life, do they see that joy? Do they come away and think, “Man, why is he so happy?”

You see, there are several problems with getting all your joy from ministry. Ministry success can foster pride. We can begin to fool ourselves into thinking that ministry success indicates that we’re more spiritually mature than others. We can confuse the gifts of the Spirit with the fruit of the Spirit. The Corinthians had all the gifts of the Spirit, but they lacked the fruit of the Spirit. That’s why Paul wrote the great love chapter where he says, **“If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing”** (1 Corinthians 13:2). I’ve learned that I can get up here and preach a great sermon and get tons of praise, and then go home and act like a creep to my family. And not only that, the joy of ministry success is fleeting. One of the things I’ve learned in 25 years of fulltime ministry is that it’s a mixed bag. There are good days and bad days. You can bring the house down one Sunday and empty the house the next! There are days when you don’t see the impact. The sermon is boring or the small group falls apart or the neighbor that you’ve been witnessing to, turns you away. But if

our primary joy is in our salvation, we’ll always be joyful because that never changes and no one can take that away from us.

C. We rejoice that God reveals himself to the humble: This strong note of joy continues in the next section as Jesus rejoices in prayer. Look at vv. 21-24. **“At that very time He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit, and said, “I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight. All things have been handed over 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 anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.”** (vv. 21-24) Turning to the disciples, He said privately, “Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see, for I say to you, that many prophets and kings wished to see the things which you see, and did not see them, and to hear the things which you hear, and did not hear them.” Why does he rejoice? He rejoices over how God reveals himself to people. Here we delve into one of the deep mysteries of God. This is the God-element in the equation of salvation. We know that while we’re given a choice as to whether or not we accept Jesus, there is someone else working behind the scenes, and that’s God. He’s the One who opens the eyes of our hearts to see the truth of who Jesus is. You don’t get that truth by getting a 1500 on your SAT or by passing the bar exam on your first try. I can’t convince you of that truth. I can preach until I’m blue in the face about how Jesus died for your sins and how by a simple act of faith you can be forgiven for eternity, but I can’t get you to believe. That’s why we pray.

So Jesus rejoices in the fact that the Father hides himself from the wise and intelligent but reveals himself to “infants” or “little children.” What’s he saying? Is he saying it’s a good thing to be uneducated and ignorant? Or that God loves ignorant people more than smart people? Of course not. The “wise and the intelligent” were Pharisees who thought they knew it all and eventually had Christ crucified because he didn’t live up to their expectations of what the Messiah was supposed to be like. But the “little children” were the disciples who with childlike humility were open to God. It’s not that God loves ignorance, but that he hates conceit. And he loves to reveal his wisdom to those who, like little children, are humble and teachable. Paul explained this years later to the Corinthians: **“For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are, that no man should boast before God”** (1 Corinthians 1:26-29). If it was all about intelligence, than who would get the credit

for our salvation? We would. Of course, intelligent people can embrace the gospel too, but only when they humble themselves. My father was stubbornly agnostic all through my growing up. His intellect got in the way because he couldn't prove the existence of God. But then life dealt him a series of blows which he couldn't handle on his own, and at 69 he gave his life to Christ. We have to become like little children: "Lord, I'm nothing. Teach me."

When we do that, as Jesus says here, we become more blessed than prophets and kings, who longed to see what we see and hear what we hear. The prophets and kings knew about God and some of them walked with God, but they didn't know him like we know him. They didn't call him Abba (Daddy). They didn't know about the cross and the resurrection like we do. They Didn't have the Holy Spirit coming in and making his permanent home in their hearts. We have that and we're blessed, and that's what brings joy and purpose to our lives. We know him. People brag about who they know: "Well, I know Joe Montana." Big deal. I know the One who made him!

Conclusion

The cure for boredom is to know the joy and purpose and passion that come from knowing that your name is written in the book of life. It's to participate in the adventure of what God is doing as he opens hearts and minds to the truth about Jesus.