

“Basic Training?”—Luke 10:1-4

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Basic Training?”, is Luke 10:1-4 → *After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of Him, two by two, into every town and place where He Himself was about to go. And He said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord (cf. 1Timothy 1:2). Amen.

While basic training is important for developing a good worker and a more confident employee, that is not what may come to your mind upon hearing the words “basic training.” Usually it refers to a period of intense work-out and discipline in the military intended to make a self-sufficient “machine” which is capable of executing orders while protecting fellow soldiers and oneself. Those who have endured basic training, affectionately referred to as “boot camp,” tell me that it is intended to remove all the comforts of home, “whip you into shape” and teach you

the basics of survival in the battle.

There are many experiences in life which have worked to mold and train you for survival in life, usually in the form of adversities and struggles. Testimonies abound about difficult experiences which helped to build character and teach an appreciation of that with which God has blessed you in the present. Doing without some things and being denied the luxuries of life may be difficult but also beneficial for developing an attitude of gratitude for that with which God has blessed you today.

Our text records Jesus sending *seventy-two* men *two by two, into every town and place where He Himself was about to go* (verse 1). This was the same protocol when He sent out the twelve apostles on their first “missionary journey” (cf. Matthew 10:1-15; Mark 6:7-13; Luke 9:1-6). Reading over the specific instructions He gave them, telling them how to conduct themselves on their journey, sounds kind of like “basic training.” In verse 4 of our text He told them to *carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road*. Actually, it seems even worse because basic training at least gives you a backpack and equips you for your mission.

Jesus’ instructions for these disciples’ “mission” begins with the command in verse 2 of our text: *The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest*. The picture is quite simple: Since the Jews

were chosen as the people through whom Yahweh revealed the promises of His Savior for the world, it was to them first that the revealing of their fulfillment in Jesus should initially come. Thus, the words of Romans 1:16 referring to *the gospel as the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek*. They existed solely to bring Yahweh's deliverance from the power of sin, death and the devil to all people. This task now falls *upon the Israel of God* (cf. Galatians 6:16), Christ Church.

Prayer is an act of faith and obedience. Thus, Jesus "puts feet to their prayers" for workers to be sent out *into His harvest field, the lost sheep of the house of Israel* (cf. Matthew 15:24), **by sending them** out into that harvest. However, they may have wondered about being ill-equipped for the task. Especially since He did describe it as a battleground of sorts with His statement in verse 3: *Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.*

It's another picture describing the challenges which come with calling people to repent of their sins and believe in Jesus, even if it's going to God's people to do so. We too are sinners who need Jesus. It is a spiritual battle because the devil doesn't want this Gospel of the forgiveness of sins through faith in Christ Jesus to go into the lives of other people. He strives to pull us into sin and take us to hell with him, tempting us to reject, nullify and dismiss Christ's atoning work for us.

Likewise, others in this satanic delusion may reject your message and strive to remove you from their presence in some way, possibly even being a threat to your physical well being, as Jesus' picture of being *lambs in the midst of wolves* implies.

While basic training may strive to equip you to know how to navigate yourself safely in your surroundings, the basic training taking place in our text was meant to equip them quite differently. It seems Jesus wanted them to experience complete trust in the providence of God as the power of the Holy Spirit worked in many ways. They were to simply remain faithful to Christ in their task **and watch Him provide** for them physically with room and board (cf. Luke 10:7-8); provide healing works to verify their message (cf. Luke 10:9); provide peace in the midst of both acceptance or rejection of their message, knowing that it was not they who were being received or rejected but Jesus (cf. Luke 10:16); and even provide the very words to speak as Jesus promised in Matthew 10:20 → *For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.* Most importantly, they would experience the Holy Spirit work repentance and faith in Jesus in the hearts of those to whom they proclaimed the gospel so they can be saved!

The Christian life is a life of faith in the midst of risk. Thus, our “basic training” is very basic in that it moves us to go forth against all visible odds without trying to control the results. This is very difficult for us since

survival in our daily lives demands that we function with self-control, proper decision-making, common sense and so forth. Yet, even that is an illusion of sorts since the control with which we navigate through life daily demands faith as well. James 4:14-15 reminds you that *you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that."* Anyone who has experienced loss within a moment or unfulfilled expectations in well planned and implemented experiences or physical limitations and/or disabilities within seconds, is immediately thrown into the basic reality expressed in 2 Corinthians 5:7 → *we walk by faith, not by sight.*

I've often wondered if the practice of Jesus sending them *into His harvest . . . as lambs in the midst of wolves . . . two by two* was a way of providing for us frail sinners who need the support of each other in this task of sharing the Gospel with the world. From a practical perspective, Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 reminds us that *two are better than one . . . for if they fall, one will lift up his fellow.* At the same time it reminds us that a *threefold cord is not quickly broken* (cf. Ecclesiastes 4:12). In one sense, you could say Jesus actually sent them out "three by three" since the Holy Spirit was present doing His work through them.

Even knowing that Yahweh *your God is with you wherever you go* (cf. Joshua 1:9), you can still draw great comfort and strength from fellow

Christians. Scripture stresses the importance of encouraging, admonishing and helping each other as brothers and sisters in Christ to remain faithful in the burdens and struggles involved with dispensing and receiving the gospel of Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:11). You are commanded to *bear one another's burdens* (cf. Galatians 6:2). In keeping with Jesus' command in our text, Ephesians 6:18-19 concludes the picture of *the armor of God* with the command to pray *at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication . . . To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints . . . that words may be given . . . to proclaim the mystery of the gospel*. We need the support of each other on this battleground and that support will direct each other to the basics of Jesus' life, death and resurrection so that you can *stand firm . . . in the strength of **His** might* (cf. Ephesians 6:10-13).

On the night before Jesus died on the cross He reminded His disciples about this basic training. Luke 22:35 says Jesus asked them, *“When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?” They said, “Nothing.”* It appears they learned that God will provide every step of the way. It appears they learned not to depend upon themselves but upon God's power to provide in **all ways**, both physical and spiritual. It appears they learned the importance of staying focused on the purpose for which they were sent—sharing the Gospel—while God takes care of the results. Yet, with all of this apparent

learning, we know as time went on with the growth that they still had a lot of learning left to accomplish. Many times they were thrown back into the basics of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and His grace for the forgiveness of sins for **all** people.

Unlike the military, this basic training for the Christian never ends this side of heaven. Constantly we are reminded of Yahweh's providence, protection and power as we take the gospel of Jesus into our daily vocations of life. Constantly we see our frail endeavors and sins in the midst of those endeavors. Constantly we are at the altar receiving His forgiveness of sins through the Absolution, proclaiming the Gospel in our worship and the Lord Supper where we receive the forgiveness of sins anew. You see, this worship, this divine service, this letting *the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God* (cf. Colossians 3:16), this is basic training in God's grace, mercy and peace. Go in peace, serve the Lord. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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