

Today's gospel is more than just an account of Jesus sending out a group of disciples to prepare the way for him as he journeyed around the Holy Land. This event also has symbolic and moral meanings. This is the second time in Luke's gospel in which Jesus sent out a group of disciples on a mission. The first time was the twelve Apostles who were given instructions similar to what we just heard. Symbolically, the twelve Apostles represented the reassembling of the twelve tribes of Israel. Jesus' ministry began within his own people, the Jews, but then it spread outward. The seventy-two disciples whom Jesus sent out in today's gospel represented the number of gentile nations as listed in various passages in the Old Testament. The combination of these two missions tells us that Jesus has come as God's salvation to both the Jews and the gentiles—meaning he has come to save the entire world.

There is another possible understanding of these two groups which leads into the moral meaning of the passage. In modern terms, the twelve Apostles were the original bishops of the church with Peter being the first Pope. Pope Leo XIV and the bishops of today are their successors. The seventy-two could be understood as the cooperators of the bishops, meaning priests and deacons or they can represent the entire Body of Christ, especially the laity. Including the laity in the seventy-two seems appropriate when we consider that Luke himself was a layperson; he was a physician. As a doctor, Luke's main job was to care for the physical health of his patients. It would have been very easy for him to say that he couldn't get involved in Paul's ministry; it wasn't his job. Had he done that, we would not have the Acts of The Apostles which is Luke's account of what happened after Jesus' Ascension; including Pentecost. Even worse, if Luke hadn't gotten involved, we would not have his accounts of the annunciations to Zechariah or Mary, Mary's visit to Elizabeth, the birth of John the Baptist or Luke's version of Jesus birth which includes the shepherds and the angels. For some reason, Luke said yes to the Holy Spirit and became a companion of Saint Paul.

The moral lesson from today's gospel is this: Jesus said: "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few." The abundant harvest can be understood as meaning that there are a lot of souls out there who need to be brought to Jesus. Bringing souls to Jesus is primarily the work of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit prefer to work through individual people. These are the laborers that Jesus is calling for. God could do this all on his own, but since the beginning—as in the second chapter of Genesis—God has invited human beings to participate in his work. He

doesn't need our help; he desires our help. That is a sign of communion and companionship. God wants us working with him in his work of salvation. Unlike God, we do need each other's help. Pope Leo XIV can't do it on his own. Archbishop Sample can't do it on his own. Whichever parish you go to—your pastor, your deacons, your parish staffs and key volunteers can't do it on their own.

Regardless of our state in life, God created each one of us and put us here in this time and place for a specific purpose. It doesn't matter if you are a doctor or an actor or a student or a teacher or a worker in a vineyard or a caregiver at home—God wants to work through you. For some of you, perhaps God is calling you to the priesthood or diaconate or consecrated religious life—are you open to that call? For most of you, God is trying to work through you in your life at home, at school, and among your friends, family, and coworkers. Again—are you open to that call and how are you responding to it?

Jesus is calling you. Don't keep him waiting