

Luke 10:3-11

No Time to Say Hello, Goodbye!

Main idea: We have a greater purpose, a greater calling, than merely going through the motions.

Wow, it's been a busy week! This whole week, I've just felt so busy! To start it off, Abby and our little cupcake were in the hospital, so I was home with the kids playing the single stay-at-home-dad, which I can manage for a few days, but reminded me once again how awesome Abby is. Then, when Abby and cupcake came home Wednesday, I feel like every day since then I've just been rushing from one activity to the next, and I felt like I was always late, and I just never had a chance to stop and catch my breath. Kind of like this guy:

[movie clip from Alice in Wonderland]

Alice: Oh, Diana, it's just a rabbit with a waistcoat, and a watch!

Rabbit: Oh my fur and whiskers, I'm late, I'm late, I'm late!

Alice: This is curious, what could a rabbit possibly be late for? Please, sir!

Rabbit: I'm late, I'm late! For a very important date! No time to say "hello," goodbye! I'm late, I'm late, I'm late!

Alice: It must be awfully important, like a party or something! Mr. Rabbit, wait!

Rabbit: No, no, no, no, no, no, I'm overdue! I'm really in a stew! No time to say "goodbye," hello! I'm late, I'm late, I'm late!

Alice: My, what a peculiar place to have a party. You know, Diana, we really shouldn't be doing this. After all, we haven't been invited, and curiosity often leads to trouble!

Goodbye, Diana! Goodbye!

How often do you feel like the white rabbit in Alice in Wonderland? Like you're just rushing through life, and you don't have time for meaningful conversations, you don't have time for people, and you don't even have time for yourself?

I think we often do that to ourselves. We fill up our schedule with lots of things, sometimes even very good things, but after awhile our schedule stops working for us and we start working for our schedule. I think we often do that as a church, too. We start a ministry and it's going great for a while, but then we lose our passion for it, and involvement in the ministry dwindles, but instead of reevaluating it, we continue to do it, because it's on the schedule. And we're reluctant to just stop doing it, because it seems important, but nobody's heart is quite in it like at the first.

Solomon warned about that kind of business in Ecclesiastes. Instead of filling our lives up with things that don't matter, we're to be joyful in doing and enjoying the simple things that God gives us.

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Well, that's why as Christians, and as a church, it's important not only to do good, but to know why we're doing the good. We don't do good merely for the sake of the good, but for God. And since it's not for the sake of the good thing itself, sometimes that means stopping one good thing we're doing so that we can rest in God, be refreshed in God, and then start something even better that God equips us to do for His glory.

So we should be careful not to be like the white rabbit.

But what if I were to tell you that, at least in one aspect of our Christian lives, that's exactly how we should be?

Turn or tap with me to Luke chapter 10, beginning in verse 3.

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. Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house!' And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house. Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near.' (Luke 10:3-11)

Father, help us to remember that we're on mission. That we have a purpose in this life. That we aren't to be wasteful with our time, but to take every opportunity given to us to show Your grace with others, as You've shown Your grace to us. Use us for that purpose, in Jesus's name, Amen.

We started looking a couple weeks ago at these strange instructions that Jesus gave to seventy-two of His disciples as He sent them out to be witnesses. Today we're going to look primarily at verses 4 and 9. First, verse 4.

Jesus told them, "Carry no moneybag." Now that's a strange instruction, isn't it? "I'm sending you out, but don't take any money!" I mean, how were they going to eat? If they had no money, they couldn't buy food. And where were they going to sleep? They couldn't pay for a room at an inn. And what if they had an emergency, and they needed to pay someone to help them? They wouldn't be able to do it.

Jesus also told them, "Carry no knapsack." This would be similar to packing a suitcase. Jesus told them, "You don't need it." And Jesus told them, "Carry no sandals." Or, probably, we should understand that to mean "extra sandals," or else it would seem even more strange, like Jesus was telling to go barefoot or something.

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Well, for those instructions, we saw last week how they were to rely on God providing through people that they meet. The people who welcomed the disciples would provide their lodging, and their meals, for the laborer is worthy of his wages. God was going to provide for them.

So I think the strangest command of all of the ones in verse 4 is the last one, "Greet no one on the road." Really? I mean, what kind of instruction is that? Isn't greeting people on the road kind of the point? Aren't we supposed to be nice to people? Jesus was sending them out into His harvest. How were they going to get the word out about Jesus unless they made the most of every opportunity?

And what about Solomon's advice that we're not be so busy? What can possibly be so important that we can't take time to enjoy meeting and greeting someone on the road?

Well, this is a case where we need a little cultural background to get what's going on, because it actually has to do with ancient customs and formalities. You see, it took a lot of time to greet people on the road. You'd stop everything, all your camels, all your wagons, all your servants, and you'd get down from your camel, sometimes even prostrate yourself on the ground as a display of humility, then get up, grasp the person you met on the road by the shoulders, and kiss them on each cheek, sometimes several times, in order to show that you respected them, and that you meant them no harm, and all of that took a lot of time. It was a cultural formality.

Jesus was simply saying, "Your mission has no time for formalities."

You know, we've got a lot of formalities in the church. When we come together, we expect certain things. A certain order of worship. A certain style of music. We develop certain habits in terms of what we do and who we talk to on Sunday morning. We get used to the church catering to us. We get used to sitting in the same place week after week, and that's our place. That's our pew. And it becomes a running joke among us, "You're sitting in my pew." But please, please, please, never say that to a guest, because they don't know that you're joking.

One of the churches I visited while I was on sabbatical was a growing church. I was really looking forward to being there, to worship and be encouraged. But I had trouble finding the church, so I ended up getting there a few minutes late, and the service had already started, and the preacher was actually already preaching. And the worship service was packed, which was exciting, but it also meant it wasn't immediately clear where I could sit. I hurriedly glanced around. I felt like everyone was staring at me, but I didn't see anywhere to sit near the back, where I came in, so I had to walk all the way to the front, to the only seats I saw empty, and even though I'm a Christian, and a pastor, and I've visited probably a hundred different churches in my life, I felt insecure, like I didn't belong, and wasn't welcome.

Now, I got over it, because church isn't about me, and yet, as a church, we should always be thinking of the needs of others above our own. So I want you to look around right now, and see

where everyone is sitting. Now ask yourself, if a guest were to come in right now, where would they have to sit? Where would they feel most comfortable sitting?

Now, I use that as just one example of following through on our mission. And that's such a small thing. But we often do a lot of things that make sense to us, and make us comfortable and happy, but don't make a lot of sense to guests, and might make them very uncomfortable.

But our mission is so important that we need to be willing sometimes to cast off old formalities, old traditions, that hinder us from sharing the gospel with those who desperately need it.

Jesus said something about that. When talking with the Pharisees, Jesus said in Matthew 15:3,

“Why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?”

How many commands do you break for the sake of tradition? It's become a tradition in our culture today to live together and sleep together before marriage, when God says that sex is only for husband and wife in the context of marriage. It's become a tradition in our culture to put ourselves first when it comes to our time, our money, our goals, but the Bible says to consider others as more significant than ourselves, and that the one who isn't rich toward God is a fool! It's become a tradition in our culture to say that all roads lead to heaven, when the Bible says that there is only one road that leads to heaven, and that's by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

There are a million ungodly traditions all around us. And some of them seem right to us. After all, our parents did them. Their parents did them. This is the way the church has always been. But tradition is not our guide to life. The Bible says,

There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death. (Proverbs 14:12)

Destruction. Judgment. Hell. Our way, the way that seems right to us, leads us to hell, the place of torment. The place where God does not restrain His wrath, because we've broken His commands. Sin deserves death, and anyone who has not trusted in Jesus Christ will experience God's wrath in hell.

Church family, let's not waste our lives, busying ourselves with worthless things. It's not bad to be busy, but we need to get busy doing the right things. The things that glorify God. Things that show the world how great and good and gracious our God is.

You see, I don't think Jesus was contradicting Solomon. Solomon was saying, “Don't be so busy with things that don't matter! Make it your purpose to enjoy God!” And Jesus was saying, “Don't be so busy with things that don't matter! Make it your purpose to share God!” And I think these are the same, because for us, sharing Jesus should be the most joyful thing that we do.

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I like what Alice said as she chased after the busy white rabbit. She said, "It must be awfully important, like a party or something."

Have you ever thought of evangelism as inviting your friends to a party? I mean, that's what heaven is! It's a great banquet! It's a wedding party, as Jesus is finally and fully united with His Bride, the Church! So as long as we're on this earth, our purpose is to invite people to the party.

You see, we have a greater purpose, a greater calling, than merely going through the motions. The time is evil, and we only have so much of it. Don't waste it. That's what Jesus was telling His disciples. "Greet no one on the road" simply means, "Don't waste your life." Use it wisely. Get to those people that God has called you to, and pour yourself out for them.

I think that's what Jesus meant by verse 9 as well. Talking about the towns His disciples would go to, Jesus told them,

Heal the sick in it and say to them, "The kingdom of God has come near to you."

In other words, don't stop until you get there, and when you get there, don't stop until you've healed everyone, and shared with everyone the grace that was given to you.

How busy are we about doing that? "Heal the sick." That's kind of like saying, "Minister to the hurting. To the poor. To the outcasts." We kind of do that a little, I guess. We give to Nokomis Christian Missions a few dollars a month. A few of us volunteer there once a month. And we give to missions through the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program, which is really a phenomenal way to distribute what all of our churches collect and designate for that purpose. Forget giving to humanitarian charities, when you give here, through the church, a portion of it funds things like starting churches, seminary education for ministry leaders, disaster relief and missionaries serving around the world, and all of this is in the name of Jesus! That's worth giving to! And all of these are good things, but we can do more, so much more.

We could eat more frugally, we could cut back to only the bare necessities, and give every penny that we could possibly afford. In fact, we could sell all that we have and give it all to the poor. We could. And maybe we should. Certainly each one of us should pray and ask God what He would have us each specifically to do.

But I also think this whole passage is not just instruction for us, but a reminder to us, of what Jesus did for us. You see, Jesus didn't get distracted from His mission. He went about His Father's business. He healed the sick. And I think He did go barefoot, as He carried the cross to the place where He would be crucified. And Jesus healed us of all of our sin when He died on that cross. And He tells each one of us, "The kingdom of God has come near to you."

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Jesus loves you! He died for you! He's come near to you. He's so very close to you; don't turn Him away.

Because the Christian life isn't about rushing around trying to do enough, but about resting in the One who did everything for us. And it's a party. It's entering into the joy of our master. That doesn't mean that there won't be struggles in this life. Because there's still a way that seems right to us that leads to death, but the more we rest not in ourselves, but in our Savior, the more we find joy even while facing hard times.

So, yeah, get busy doing good things, the good things that God has called you to, but while doing them, remember to rest in the best part of it all, which is Jesus Himself.

Jesus, thank You for healing us. Thank You for fulfilling Your purpose in saving us. Help us to follow You, following Your purpose for us. Use us to show Nokomis and the world how good You are. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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