



## 4. Rejection

Luke 10:1-20

Rejection. No-one likes rejection. Whether it is a boyfriend or girlfriend getting the push, or not getting the job we applied for, or not being good enough to qualify in sport or at an audition, or just being told to "push off" by someone you thought was a friend – people can find rejection a crushing experience. In fact, most people live life trying to avoid getting rejected.

We have been looking at the whole area of reaping as Christians and we found that reaping should be an easy task that any Christian can do when we are prepared to be sent out into the field by the master to help bring to Christ those people in whom the Holy Spirit is working.

And the disciples were sent out into places Jesus was due to visit to befriend people, to meet their felt needs and tell them that their real need was going to be dealt with – that the kingdom of God is near.

And I have encouraged each of us over the last few weeks to take on this word of scripture that God wants each of us to have that privilege of bringing in His harvest – of helping others find Jesus.

And what happens – most people recognise that scripture is there but don't do anything about it. Why? Because they fear that people are going to reject what they have to say. And that can be hurtful.

We have to be realists. Take a look at the population of Felixstowe and at least 95% of people have nothing to do with religion – and most probably don't see the need to. Some of those are even hostile to the Christian faith for whatever reason.

Jesus knew something similar when he sent out the 72. They would get to towns and villages where they would not be welcome. They would offer peace and have to take it back because people did not want to know about Jesus or the kingdom of heaven. Rejection.

What should they do? Get angry? Be upset? What Jewish preachers and travelling rabbis did when they were thrown out of towns was speak a curse on it (did they). How should Jesus disciples respond? Here are three things Jesus suggested.

### ◆ **Rejection comes with the territory**

***10 But whenever you go into a town and are not welcomed, go out in the streets and say, 11 "Even the dust from your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you. But remember that the Kingdom of God has come near you!"***

We already know from an earlier week of the potential dangers that reaping brings and now Jesus is more forthright in what He says – you will be rejected, you won't be welcome in some places.

We've all been there. With the best will in the world we've tried to talk about our faith with someone and they've given us the brush off. Thankfully the British are very polite and know how to politely refuse. I remember training some Korean students a few years ago who were on a mission to the UK and visiting homes in our area of London. Their reports of people they

met were interesting. They went something like this. "We met Mrs Smith, an elderly lady. She was thankful for our visit but was unable to speak to us today." The British brush off which you have to be British to realise - "Not today thank you".

Worse are those people who get angry when we speak about our faith or who laugh at us. Maybe we have people in our family who do that, or friends, neighbours or workmates who we may think will give us the brush off. So we're afraid to.

The instruction to the disciples was not to push it when their hearers dropped the shutters and switched off the lights – they were to say goodbye and just say something along the lines that even though they were going it didn't get away from the fact that the kingdom of God was near. The expression "shake the dust of your feet" is interesting. In those days pious Jews would shake the dust off their sandals when returning to Judea from gentile lands. It was symbolic to indicate that as God's people they did not wish to pollute themselves with gentile uncleanness.

For the disciples to shake the dust of their feet signified that the town was cutting itself off from Jesus and the blessings He brings and still didn't get away from the fact that the kingdom of God was near. The only place this is recorded as actually happened is in Acts 13:50-51 at Pisidian Antioch: *48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. 49 And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region. 50 But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district. 51 But they shook off the dust from their feet against them and went to Iconium. 52 And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.*

Interesting, Paul and Barnabas shook the dust off their feet at Jews because they were rejected from bringing Gentiles to Christ. If the Jews wouldn't listen then they were out of there.

How can we apply this to us? Simply, don't waste your time pushing on a closed door when there are plenty of open ones available. By the disciples shaking the dust of their feet and going elsewhere didn't mean that the place and people were damned eternally. Paul left a church there to grow and take their opportunities there and visited there again too. The disciples in Luke's gospel were departing with the same message "The kingdom of God is near". There would hopefully be other opportunities for the town and people to hear the message of Jesus.

It's important to understand when to speak and when to leave for another day. I know of lots of people that have been turned off faith by Christians trying to push it when they were just not ready to listen. If people don't respond then that's fine – be gracious and realise that there is normally another day. We are called often in scripture to persevere so pray for opportunities.

That's where prayer and being close to God comes in, because then we get to know when to call it a day for now and look in our lives for the people the Holy Spirit is moving and need us to guide them on their journey to Christ.

### ◆ **Rejection is not our responsibility to deal with**

***16 Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me; and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me."***

***12 I assure you that on the Judgement Day God will show more mercy to Sodom than to that town!***

I find when Christians push it with people who are rejecting their message it is because they are desperate for that person to know because they care about them and they don't want to drop it. Others won't even talk to their friends etc. because they are afraid of rejection. But we need to realise that when people reject what we have to say about our faith and an

invitation to follow Jesus, that it isn't just us that they are rejecting, but they are rejecting Jesus and rejecting God. So understand that when you are rejected, the responsibility for dealing with that lies with God. We're just His witnesses, His ambassadors. History and Scripture both show us that people get lots of opportunities in life to accept Christ. Our responsibility is just to bring peace and the message – the responsibility of our hearers is to respond to God. Our responsibility is to say ***“the Kingdom of God has come near you!”***

But as part of that we saw a dire warning. Let's look at it more closely.

### ➡ **Rejection has consequences for those who reject**

And Jesus said about the towns rejecting them that God was going to deal with them awfully in the future because they had their opportunity. I want you to have a look at the pictures of the following five towns which we read about: They are Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, Tyre and Sidon. Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum were Galilean fishing towns. Jesus knew them well, he knew the people well and preached and worked miracles in all of them. Tyre and Sidon are towns in the modern Lebanon – Jesus never visited them ever. They were both well-known Gentile towns. I've mixed them up – you tell me which ones are Tyre and Sidon?

Out of the five, only Tyre and Sidon still exist – both towns with a long Christian ancestry. The Galilean towns where people witnessed Jesus first-hand are all long gone. For all their hearing of the word of God, they were Jewish towns that along with many others resisted the growth of the gospel which Tyre and Sidon readily embraced.

***13 "How terrible it will be for you, Chorazin! How terrible for you too, Bethsaida! If the miracles which were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, the people there would have long ago sat down, put on sackcloth, and sprinkled ashes on themselves, to show that they had turned from their sins! 14 God will show more mercy on the Judgement Day to Tyre and Sidon than to you.***

God does deal with those who reject Jesus. There is a time coming when all those who reject the Christian faith will come under judgement and eternal separation from God. Whether we like it or not, it's the truth of scripture. But even before the people will receive God's judgement, the towns have already kopped it and stand as a witness and warning that those who reject us reject Christ and reject the eternal life that He freely offers them in Christ.

I know that most here this morning have accepted Christ, but if you haven't then according to Jesus you have nothing on which to base your eternal hope. Yet we have a God who as we read, desires that none should perish and Jesus gives you that invitation again this morning to get right with Him, to find forgiveness and acceptance from a God who loved you and went to an awful lot of trouble to enable you to have the opportunity to know Him eternally and to make sense of life. So what about it?

We understand that if we seek to follow what Jesus has taught and go in to reap the harvest, we will find rejection. As I said earlier, that puts some off even bothering to try because no-one likes feeling that they are being rejected. But we understand that those who reject us reject Christ and those that rejects Christ reject the Father – and the consequences of doing that are awful. In one sense that fact alone should encourage us to risk the rejection and share the Good News with others.

But there's more. Look at this verse: ***17 The seventy-two men came back in great joy. "Lord," they said, "even the demons obeyed us when we gave them a command in your name!"***

They took Jesus seriously, followed His commands and they found that people not only responded well but they found that they even had power over demons – Jesus had said nothing about that to the 72 here in Luke 10. Their mission had exceeded expectations.

In the last few weeks I've given you some contrasting messages – on one hand I've encouraged you in the truth that reaping is easy and for us all, yet warned you that we are lambs amongst wolves. I have given you a practical message of how each of us can use what

we do naturally as social animals – to make friends – to further God’s purposes, yet I have now talked about the certainty that some will reject our message.

Verse 17 keeps us in perspective (as indeed the rest of the passage which we’ll deal with in a later week). As we start to take Jesus seriously about reaping – see the harvest He is producing – and then seek to bring it in, then despite the dangers; as we move under the guidance of His Spirit, we do see blessing – and plenty of it. That’s the message of Luke 10. That’s the message of Scripture. And how does that expectation start – yes back in the place I’ve ended up in every week as well – in prayer.

Let’s pray:

*Father, please give me wisdom to know the best way to share the message of Jesus with all those that I know who are not yet Christians. Father, I recognize that only you can break down the barriers Satan erects in the hearts of those who reject your message. Help me know when it is best to move on and leave that work to you. In the lives of those near and dear to me, please use my daily faithfulness as one of the influences used to win their hearts for Jesus, in whose name I pray. Amen.*

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