

The Seventy



Luke 10:1-20
Year C Proper 9

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Parts by scene

■ = large part ▲ = medium sized part ● = small part

		1	2	3	4	5
■	James - the most officious disciple, often the most frustrated with Jesus' unconventional decisions (such as his allowing women to join the group)	▲		▲	●	▲
●	Phillip - one of the youngest disciples, always well-meaning and honestly curious, sometimes lacking in confidence	●			▲	
●	Thomas - the skeptic, who really wants to believe because of his emotional bond with the others, but can't simply ignore his doubts	●				
▲	John - the gentlest and most caring of the disciples		▲			●
▲	Joanna - a wealthy woman with a perceptive and agile intellect who abandons her life as the co-manager of King Herod's household to follow Jesus		▲			●
●	Man - a man sincerely interested in becoming a disciple along with his wife		●			
●	Woman - a woman sincerely interested in becoming a disciple along with her husband		▲			●
▲	Mary Magdalene - a 'fallen woman' who became the first female disciple, the humblest member of the group due to her shame about her past		▲			
▲	Peter - the most headstrong disciple, and the least afraid of a fight, but never the smartest person in the room			■		
■	Brother #1 - a new follower who returns from his first mission bursting with excitement about the wonders he witnessed				■	
▲	Brother #2 - a new follower who returns from his first mission bursting with excitement about the wonders he witnessed				▲	
▲	Jesus					■

Scene 1

James , Phillip , Thomas

James *[complaining]* It's not right!

Phillip What's not right?

James How he's treating us.

Thomas How who's treating us?

James The rabbi!

Phillip How the rabbi is treating us? I don't get it. How's the rabbi treating us?

James Like dirt. Like he doesn't trust us. Like we're...peons!

Thomas But he's entrusted us to train all these new followers. It's like we're his lieutenants. Isn't that what you've always looked forward to? Being his right hand man?

James Yeah, right, big responsibility! The instructions are so simple a child could relay them. What I want to know is: why isn't he sending *us* to prepare the way for him? Why are we recruiting all these...replacements, and sending them out instead?

Scene 2

Joanna , John , Man , Mary , Woman

{John, Joanna, and Mary patiently train two new disciples, a husband and wife, who have many sincere questions.}

John You know which town you're supposed to visit, right? Once you get there, find a house to stay in, and remain there as long as they'll let you.

Joanna Don't go door-to-door, trying one house after the other. Rather, find the right places and go straight to them.

Man How will we be able to tell what the right places are?

Joanna Um...John?

John Uh, I'm not sure, either, but we can ask the rabbi when we're done here.

Joanna Once you're in the house, take whatever they give you, and do whatever you can for them. If anyone is sick, heal them, and -

Woman Heal them? How? We're not doctors.

John We've healed many, and even raised the dead. The rabbi has the power.

Man But we don't, and he won't be there.

Woman We really want to help. We believe in his message and his mission, but it's not sounding like we'd be very good at this particular job. Maybe we could do something else.

Joanna Please, let us finish giving you your instructions, and then we can speak to the rabbi and he'll be able to answer any questions you have, and then you can decide if this is right for you, okay?

John The only thing left is your message. You're to tell all the households who take you in, "The Kingdom of God has come near you."

Man "Has come" near them? Shouldn't it be "is coming"?

Woman We're there to announce the coming of the rabbi, aren't we? He hasn't already been there, has he?

Joanna No, he hasn't. But I'm pretty sure that's what he told us to tell people to say.

John *[to Joanna]* Maybe we should have thought these instructions through a little more when he gave them to us.

Joanna *[to the couple]* We apologize for not being better prepared. If you could wait for the rabbi to return, I'm sure he'll be able to answer all your questions.

Man Of course. We came to serve. We came to stay.

John Good. Supper should be ready soon. Stay and eat with us. He should be back soon after.

Joanna In the meantime, do you have any other questions?

{An awkward silence, as the couple aren't inclined to ask any more questions they probably won't get the answers to, and John and Joanna can sense that.}

John *[realizing Mary was supposed to be part of this but hasn't spoken at all]* Mary, do you have anything to add?

Mary *[summoning up her courage and speaking earnestly to the couple]* You'll know the

households you should stay at. They'll be households of peace, and the spirit of peace is something you can see in a man's face, or hear in his voice. You'll be able to feel it in the very stones of the houses. And there are all kinds of ways to heal. Do what you can to comfort them in whatever distress they're suffering, and healing will happen, maybe more than you expect. And *of course* the kingdom of God will already be there; it'll be in *you*!

Scene 3

James , Peter

{James goes over to talk to Peter.}

James Have you seen John anywhere?

Peter He's busy training one of the newbies.

James Shoot. Okay, I guess I'll try to catch him later.

Peter Is there a problem?

James No, no. Everything's fine.

Peter Come on, try me! I might be dumb, but I'm not stupid.

James *[laughing]* All right. Sure. Here's the deal: I feel like the rabbi has turned his back on us somehow, like he's passing us over. I'm probably just being paranoid or thin-skinned, but you know, all these new people he's bringing in, and -

Peter That's it? You think he's soured on us?

James I know it's silly, but -

Peter I can't believe it took you this long to see it!

James *[stunned]* What, you mean you agree?

Peter Of course. It's been pretty obvious.

James Wow. Then it's true. What I can't figure out, though, is why!

Peter Dude, that's obvious, too!

James You know the reason he's passing us over? What is it?

Peter *[simply]* We screwed up.

James What? How? How did we screw up?

Peter Are you serious? Don't you remember the night we tried to stay in that Samaritan town?

James So I lost my temper. I've done that before and he was fine with it.

Peter I'm not talking about that. It's not how mad we got, but what we wanted to do.

James What are you talking about?

Peter Okay, listen, I'll lay it out brick by brick. We're about to enter Jerusalem, and we're pretty sure the big day is just around the corner, right? But then we get turned away by the town and come back mad, and we ask the rabbi to curse the town. Remember?

James So what? They deserved it!

Peter Hold on, I'm not finished yet. Think about what happened right after that. He gets very concerned and asks if we all feel that way, and when we say we do, he suddenly decides not to enter Jerusalem the next day after all. Then, within a week, we start recruiting these new workers. Do you see what's happening now?

James *[distraught]* Oh my God. I was too upset that night to notice what I'd done. I ruined it, for everybody!

Peter You really don't remember anything if that's what you think. It was all of us! I was just as mad as you. Just not as loud! And even John signed on to taking revenge on that town. Remember?

James *[sighing]* And now the Day has passed us by.

Peter *[cheerfully]* Buck up, James. We're still soldiers. We just got reassigned is all. The battle plan got changed, but we're still going to win the war. I'll serve wherever he sends me.

James Thanks. You're right. That's what we'll be: good soldiers.

Scene 4

Brother #1 , Brother #2 , James , Phillip

{The first messengers sent out are beginning to return already. Two of these new disciples, who are brothers, give their report to the others.}

Brother #1 It was amazing! I can't believe how well it went, and I was so apprehensive at first.

Brother #2 He was worried we'd be killed! But everybody welcomed us.

Brother #1 Even the Samaritans!

James *[shocked, in a concerned voice]* You went to the Samaritans?

Brother #2 Well, yes. The rabbi said to visit all the towns along the southern road, and when we got to the border, we just kept going. Should we have stopped?

Phillip Of course not. The good news we bring is for everybody. The rabbi says that all the time. Right, James?

Brother #1 I'm glad we did, because the most amazing thing happened in one Samaritan town. I cast out a demon!

James *[a little crestfallen]* You what? I...can't believe it.

Brother #2 I can hardly believe it myself, and I saw it with my own eyes!

Phillip So tell us! How did it happen?

Brother #1 The family we were staying with had a daughter who was - well, they thought she was sick, or mad. She was always yelling and screaming, at all hours, and sometimes she would attack her own parents. They were heartbroken about it, and I found myself wishing we could do something to help.

Brother #2 They'd brought in all the best doctors, but no one could do anything.

Brother #1 One night, when she was more sick than mad, just lying moaning in her bed, I sat by her, and not knowing what else I could do, I took her hand and prayed for her. As I prayed, she opened her eyes and looked up at me, and suddenly, I just knew it was not that little girl looking into my eyes.

Brother #2 I was watching from the door, and it was the most uncanny thing I ever saw, even though nothing really happened. I wanted to bolt, but felt riveted to the spot.

Brother #1 The girl asked me who I was, in a hoarse voice like the voice of an animal, and I answered that I was a disciple of Jesus of Nazareth, and then...well, all hell broke loose. She began screaming again, and banging her head against the wall.

Brother #2 Then I really did run away. It was terrifying!

Brother #1 I was about to run myself, but instead...I'm not sure what to call it, but I think the spirit of God came upon me. Something took control of me, and I found myself commanding the demon in the rabbi's name to stop tormenting the girl, and suddenly, she was calm.

Brother #2 And she was fine from that day on. Her parents were so grateful!

Phillip What did you mean by "something took control" of you? Was it like being forced to do something against your will?

Brother #1 No, no, it wasn't like that at all. It was more like - hold on, you must surely know the feeling!

Phillip Not a bit.

Brother #2 Don't you heal people and cast out demons all the time?

Phillip Never. None of us have.

James *[defensively]* We serve right at the rabbi's side, so he's always there for anything we do. He does all the healing directly.

Brother #2 I envy you. Now that we've completed this task, I hope he'll let us stay by him, too.

Brother #1 So anyway, it wasn't like being controlled. It was more like...being lifted. Like when I was a child and our father would lift us up in his strong arms and fly us around through the air like a bird. Or like diving off a cliff, the moment you plunge into the icy cold water. Or...well, I can't explain. You'll have to experience it for yourself some day to really know.

Scene 5

James , Jesus , Joanna , John , Woman

{John, Joanna, and Mary continue to chat with the couple while they wait for Jesus to return. The group from the previous scene has come over and is gathered around them.}

Woman What if a town won't let us in at all?

Joanna Well, I suppose you'll have to be patient. Explain to them what we're about, try to make them understand.

John Maybe the gatekeepers barring your way are the very people you're supposed to reach in that town. Do what you can to keep them talking with you, even if...

Jesus *[entering]* No! If you're turned away, shake the dusk of that town off your feet and tell them it's a sign that the kingdom of God came to them and they couldn't recognize it.

[almost to himself, with smoldering intensity] When the Day comes, they will fare no better than the most violent and arrogant peoples of the past.

[half mournful and half angry, caught up in a strange dark mood, looking up into the heavens and no longer talking to the immediate company at all] Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If anyone else had seen the wonders you've been vouchsafed, they would have long ago repented and turned to the light. And you, Capernaum, do you think you're climbing to the heavens? No, you're on your way to Hell!

{A long stunned silence.}

James *[having reached a breaking point]* No! No! No! This isn't right!

{Jesus, the spell broken, looks up at James in surprise.}

James *[angrily]* You tell us we can't call down judgment on that Samaritan town - you cast us aside just for asking you to do it - and here you are doing it yourself! It's not fair! It's not right!

Jesus *[imploringly]* James, James. When did I ever cast you aside, and how am I calling down judgment on these cities?

James What? You said...but I thought...but then why... *[realizing that Jesus never strictly did either of those things and falling to his knees]* Rabbi! Kick me out, do it anyway, this is too hard! I can't keep up. Everybody else, even Peter, gets you better than I do. I'm the worst! I don't deserve to be your follower.

Jesus *[to the whole group]* Hear me now! Take no pride in the wonders you've been able to perform. Take no pleasure from any power or position

you think you might have. Rather, rejoice in this one thing: that your names are written in Heaven. I saw Satan fall like lightning from Heaven, but I have no power to remove you from that Book. *[Still talking to the group, but lowering his voice and looking directly at James.]* Rest in that.

*You can read my thoughts about this play and respond with your own at **www.WineskinProject.net/blog/seventy***

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