**God’s Plan for Spiritual Success**

Joshua 1:1-9; Revelation 12:7-12; Luke 10:1-20; Psalms 24 9.29.19

Summary: Jesus gives us His formula for Spiritual Success.

INTRO: I am sure this morning many of us have seen the "Let's Make a Deal" game show. It goes like this:

 Suppose you are on the game show, and you're given the choice of three doors: Behind one door is a car, behind the other two doors are goats. You pick a door, say Number 1, and the host before he opens door #1, asks you if you would rather pick door Number 2. Is it to your advantage to switch doors?

 If you ever watched "Let's Make A Deal" then you have watched that problem in action. The host loved to confuse people by trying to get them to either change their minds or go crazy in trying to figure out what to do. Should they pick door #1, #2 or #3. And after they pick door #1 should they change their minds and pick either door # 2 or #3?

 How many of you have ever played along with "Let's Make a Deal" and have picked the right door? How about the wrong door?

 This morning, our Lukan passage could be seen like "Let's Make a Deal". Jesus wants them to understand what the GREATEST PRIZE IN LIFE is.

 In our passage, St. Luke shares that Jesus had sent out 72 of his most committed and consecrated disciples and they had experienced some amazing SUCCESS. They had been able to do things that just a few weeks earlier they could not have even imagined. Luke tells us that they had been able to preach about the Kingdom of God, heal the sick and even cast out demons. Can you imagine being a part of one of those teams?

 While they had faced some opposition & trials they didn't want to spend time focusing on the negatives. We don't hear them complaining about not having enough food or shelter or anything in this passage. Instead as we read in verse 17, they all come back rejoicing & celebrating. They had experienced the time of their lives. They were ecstatic over what they had seen & accomplished for Jesus.

 Sure, they had been sent out as lambs in the midst of wolves. But in the name of Jesus those lambs had been able to bring freedom and healing into the lives of people. They had been able to do the same miracles that they had watched Jesus perform. They had been able to cure fevers, heal the lame, enable the blind to see and cleanse the leper. They had been able to bring healing and wholeness into the lives of people who were suffering, depressed and decimated.

 Can you imagine how they were feeling? How would we feel this morning if for a few days we were able to go out and preach, heal people and cast out demons? How would we feel if we could do some of the things that Jesus did while He was here on the earth? No wonder they were all pumped up and ready to do some more. They had gotten a taste of what it meant to be ANOINTED and EMPOWERED by the Holy Spirit and they wanted more.

 In verse 20, Jesus wants to CALM THEM DOWN a little and have them FOCUS on the most important part of their mission. In a way Jesus wants them to choose Door #3. They had already seen and experienced

 Door # 1 - People being healed of all kinds of sicknesses and diseases

 Door # 2 - People being freed from demonic possessions

 And now Jesus wants them to look into Door #3 - the most important door of all. Jesus wants them to understand what is even MORE IMPORTANT than healing and casting out demons. He wants them to understand what should bring the most joy and celebration in their lives. Jesus tells them in verse 20 - *" ... do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that YOUR NAMES ARE WRITTEN IN HEAVEN."*

 The greatest experience and the thing we should rejoice about the most is not how much spiritual power or how many spiritual gifts we possess. The thing that we should rejoice about the most is that our names are written down in heaven. In other words that we have been REDEEMED, RENEWED and RESTORED into the image of Jesus Christ. There is nothing as great as knowing that we are saved and sanctified this morning.

 Jesus told them this because he was afraid that these 72 disciples and others would get all caught up in their ability to heal and cast out demons. They would focus on their own spiritual abilities rather than the gift of salvation. They would focus on what they could do for people's physical, emotional and social needs at the expense of their spiritual needs. They would forget that Jesus' TRUE MISSION was to REDEEM, RENEW and RESTORE mankind. We must always remember that Jesus' highest mission was to SAVE us and SANCTIFY us this morning.

 In this passage Jesus shares with us His FORMULA FOR SPIRITUAL SUCCESS. He shares with us how we can experience success in both evangelism and spiritual formation. He shares with us how we can be successful in being the Body of Christ. He shares with us how we can be Jesus to all those around us.

**1. It all begins with Depending on the LORD - "the LORD appointed."**

 Everything that happened - all the discipleship, healing, transforming, changing lives, casting out demons - everything they experienced happened because these 72 people began to follow and depend on Jesus. Everything began with and depended on Jesus.

 These 72 disciples had walked with Jesus for some time. They had not simply joined up and decided to go on this trip. As you read the story Luke tells us that Jesus APPOINTED these disciples. The word means to proclaim as being elected, or chosen for a high office.

 They were not chosen by accident. These 72 individuals were among the most committed and consecrated of Jesus' disciples. It's important to remember that the 12 Apostles were not a part of this group of 72 workers. They had their own unique mission. These 72 individuals were a part of a greater group of Jesus' disciples.

 Hippolytus of Rome1 ( who was a disciple of Irenaeus, a disciple of Polycarp, a disciple of Apostle John) records that the 72 were made up of individuals like Matthias, Ananias, Stephen, Philip, Barnabas, Luke and John Mark. We don't know exactly if that is correct but it wouldn't surprise me if those men had been part of the 72. All we know is that they had been redeemed and were selectively chosen by Jesus to be his missionaries.

 Like the Apostles they had not been chosen because of their heritage, their intelligence or their own innate abilities. They were chosen because they had SURRENDERED their heart and lives to Jesus. They were chosen because they had DECIDED that Jesus was the Way, the Truth and the Life. They were chosen because they were WILLING to do anything and everything that Jesus wanted them to do.

 It's the same today. Jesus is not looking for the most intelligent or the person with the greatest innate abilities. He certainly enjoys when such an individual decides to follow Him but all Jesus needs is a WILLING HEART, an OPEN MIND and an OBEDIENT SPIRIT. Paul tells us that Jesus has often chosen those whom the world thought was weak and used them to transform the world (1 Cor. 1:27).

Ill. Perhaps there is no greater example of that than John Wesley. Wesley was the 15th child of Samuel and Susan Wesley. He was a good student but not a great student and he suffered from bouts of anger, depression and fear. He was only 5' 3" tall and weighed less than 128 pounds for most of his life. He was not an overpowering figure of a man.

 And yet, Wesley was able to travel over 250,000 miles for the LORD and preach over 40,000 sermons all over England and America. By the time of his death there were nearly 80,000 people who called themselves Methodists.

 What was the key? What was it that made this little man able to do so much in his lifetime and leave behind such a legacy? It was because he DEPENDED totally on the LORD. He allowed God to reach down and fill his heart with His Holy Spirit. He allowed God to put an anointing on his life that gave him supernatural strength, courage and power.

 This morning, all the LORD needs is a WILLING HEART, an OPEN MIND and an OBEDIENT SPIRIT. We all may not do as many things as John Wesley did but we can do great things for the LORD through our lives. All we have to do is pause and tell Jesus that we are at his disposal.

 Jesus shares with us the Second Key to Spiritual Success:

**II. DEVELOPING TEAMWORK - "two by two"**

 Jesus understood the value of a team. After, all Jesus was a part of the greatest team of all time. In Genesis 1:26 the writer tells us that God said *"Let US make man in OUR own image."* Who exactly is the "*US*"? We know today that the "*US*" is God the Father, God the Son & God the Holy Spirit. Can you think of a more unified, more powerful and more loving TEAM than God the Father, God the Son & God the Holy Spirit? God loves team work because He is a part of a team.

 Genesis chapter two shares with us the story of how the first human, Adam needed to be a part of a TEAM. At first the Bible tells us that God made only Adam, there was no Eve. For some time Adam was all alone in the garden. "*Then the LORD GOD said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."* (Genesis 2:18). The LORD saw that Adam would never find total fulfillment even living in the Garden of Eden alone. So, God created Eve the very first woman. He made the VERY FIRST HUMAN TEAM - Adam and Eve; MALE AND FEMALE.

 Throughout scripture we have story after story of how much better we humans are when we are able to work together as a TEAM. Think for example of some great TEAMS that we find in the Bible - Moses and Aaron, Ruth and Naomi, David and Jonathan, Elijah and Elisha, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and Peter, James & John.

 Anyone who has ever played sports, music or been a part of a drama team understands the value of a team. Teams create synergy. We are all better together than when we are alone. We may think that we can do things alone and do things without other people but we are sadly mistaken. WE NEED ONE ANOTHER. We can't make it in this life without ONE ANOTHER.

 Dr. John Maxwell is a leadership expert, pastor, speaker and author. There are very few people in our nation that have written more or spoken more about value of teamwork than Dr. Maxwell. In his book, THE 17 INDISPUTABLE LAWS OF TEAMWORK: EMBRACE THEM AND EMPOWER YOUR TEAM, Maxwell writes this: "Individuals play the game, but teams win championships."

 Is that not true? Haven't we seen that in sports over the past 20-30 years. Individually, we have seen some great basketball players like Kobe Bryant, Steph Curry, LeBron James and Michael Jordan. Each of them outstanding All-Stars. But each one of them needed their team in order to win championships. On their own they couldn't win the ultimate prize. But with Shaq - Kobe won. With his team, Steph Curry has won. With Dewayne Wade, LeBron has won and with Scottie Pippen, Michael Jordan won.

 The New York Yankees most productive years happened between 1949 - 1953 when they won five straight World Series. None of those teams had a Babe Ruth. But they did have a team made up of people like Johnnie Mize, Mickey Mantle and Yogi Berra. Individually, they were good but not the greatest - not like Babe Ruth or Lou Gehrig or even Reggie Jackson. But working together as a team they were better than anyone. And in a 14 year period from 1949 to 1962 those same New York Yankees won 10 World Series. That's what team work will do.

 Each of those teams accomplished all their goals and more BECAUSE THEY SURRENDERED THEMSELVES OVER TO ONE ANOTHER AND FOR ONE ANOTHER.

 That is the value of our small groups. We don't have them just to pass the time or to fill up space during the week. No, it is out of those small teams, the men’s and women’s groups, the Bible study group, and the children’s ministry team, that we discover God's truth. It is out of those small groups that we share life and begin to birth miracles. It is out of those small groups that we form a bigger team called the Church of Jesus Christ. And it is in and through those groups that we learn how to be accountable to one another, live with one another and live for one another. Not to be cliques but to be essential parts of a vital Body of Christ.

 Notice in verses 4 - 9 that together these groups:

Learned how to depend on Jesus - vs 4

They learned how to use their time effectively - vs 4

They were able to discern the places & people that were open to the Gospel vs.5-6

They were able to put their wants to the side for the greater good - vs 7-8

They were able to effectively share Jesus' message - vs 9

 We can never overestimate the importance of teamwork. We can never overestimate the amount of work and the effective ministry we can have together as a team - praying and working together.

**III. Finally, Jesus tells us that through dependence and teamwork we can realize DELIVERANCE & TRANSFORMATION** -*"I saw Satan fall like lightening."*

 It all begins with Jesus - redemption, discipleship, obedience.

 It continues through teamwork - surrendering ourselves over to one another so that together we have more than we can ever have by ourselves - spiritual synergy.

 And it results with deliverance and transformation. It results in all of creation experiencing supernatural deliverance and supernatural transformation.

 Look back at what Jesus tells them in verse 19.  *"And He said to them, 'I saw Satan fall like lightening from heaven.'"*

 We read those words and I wonder if we realize their full importance. Rev. 12:7-12 shares with us the story of when the Archangel Michael throws Satan out of heaven. Luke chapter 4 shares with us the story of when Jesus defeated Satan. Satan is defeated by the LORD and by an Archangel. But here, Jesus telling us that these 72 individuals were able to throw down Satan. Depending on Jesus and working together as a team they were able to throw down the embodiment of all evil. They were able to break the chains of sinful bondage. They were able to defeat the powers of Satan.

 We must not gloss over what is happening here in this passage. Back in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve had faced Satan and lost. King David faced Satan and lost. St. Peter faced Satan and lost. Any human being that tries to face Satan in their own strength loses 100% of the time. We don't have the power, the strength or the ability to stop him. However, when we place our dependence on the LORD. When we come together in the power of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit watch what happens. Satan is defeated. Not just once but every time. He is pulled down from his throne and thrown aside. The only way we can defeat Satan is to do it in the power of Jesus Christ as the Body of Christ.

 We may be tempted today to look around us today and think that we can't stop the onslaught of evil. Things have simply fallen too far. Society is broken. The future for our nation and our world is hopeless. Did you know that the Christians living in England back in the time around John Wesley thought the same thing?

 In 1738, Bishop Berkeley declared that religion and morality in Britain had collapsed “to a degree that was never before known in any Christian country". Now, Bishop Berkeley had ample reason for making that statement. By 1839 the city of London had grown to over 1 million residents. London was also the home to over 5,000 brothels with over 80,000 prostitutes walking the streets. One out of every four people made their living through what was commonly called "sin wages."2

 The government was corrupt from top to bottom. The poor and disenfranchised were preyed upon. It was the age of "Gin" and alcohol. Slave trading was one of the leading enterprises. Gambling was a national sport. Morality was a laughing matter. Pornographic literature was popular and erotic manuals were commonly read in public. Homosexuality was fashionable among higher society with cross dressing boys being able to be rented in areas like the Molly House subculture. At the time of Wesley nearly 25% of all first-born children were born outside marriage and 40% of women came to the altar with child.

 The world that John Wesley grew up in was one in which men were proud to have both a wife and a mistress. Language, both spoken and written was full of four letter words and society looked up to those who promoted deviant behavior. It was an age much like our own today.

 Many proclaimed that the time of the Church and Christianity was over. Satan had won. But God had other plans. The LORD worked through a team of Spirit anointed people like John Wesley, the Methodists, the Quakers, George Whitfield and the Welsh, the Evangelical Anglicans, the Moravians and others to bring about a reform. They joined together to form teams of prayer warriors, missionaries and social reformers. In a matter of 50 - 100 years things started radically changing. Coffee and tea took the place of alcohol. Fidelity replaced promiscuity. The slave trade was outlawed. Hospitals and rehab centers were open to help the disenfranchised and those addicted to sex. Sunday Schools were being formed all over the nation teaching children how to read, write by using the Bible as their textbook.3 God and His people were on the move and England experienced one of the greatest revivals in history.

 I say all of this because this morning we need to understand that our world has been here before. We have been a world full of sin, filled with the demons of lust, power, greed, materialism and evil. We have experienced a time when families were being torn apart, people were becoming addicted to drugs, alcohol and immorality. We have experienced a time very much like our own where politics were corrupt, society was broken and people were suffering from poverty and want.

 Many today also want to write off the Church and Christianity. They want to say that Satan has won. But our God is still in control. And if we desire it enough, we too can experience spiritual success and a great Revival in our nation and world.

 Britain was transformed because the Church learned once again to:

+Depend solely on Jesus

+To work together in prayer, witnessing, praising and proclaiming the message of Jesus

+To create small groups for teaching and intercession

+To realize that through Jesus, Satan can fall down like lightning!

 It happened during the time of John Wesley and it has happened at least twice here in the United States - the first time back in the 1730's and then in the late 1800's when we too were suffering from all forms of evil. Things looked bleak then as well. But God brought a Revival because His people cried out for it.

 We are in need of another great awakening today. We are in need of another Great Revival. And it can start in churches just like ours. It can start with us:

+Surrendering and depending solely on Jesus

+Surrendering to one another in forming small groups and prayer groups - deciding that above all we will be a great team for Jesus Christ

+Taking the power of Jesus and bringing down Satan

 Today, it's possible for all of us to once again hear Jesus saying those words - "*I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven."*

 It can happen starting through churches and people just like us.

 That group that started the first Methodist movement actually started with John's younger brother, Charles Wesley. He and two other people started praying, studying the Bible together and doing all they could to live a holiness life. It all started off with three dedicated and consecrated young men.

 Jesus started off with 12 disciples that grew to 120 on the day of Pentecost that grew to 3,000 and today is over 2 billion.

 In Luke 10 - Jesus started with 72 committed and consecrated disciples.

 It doesn't take a large group, it just takes a group of people with OPEN MINDS, SURRENDERED HEARTS and OBEDIENT SPIRITS.

**Prayer:** O Lord, Mighty God, we need a revival today to turn people and our nation back to You. Pour out Your Holy Spirit on us today. As we turn to You for help, fill us with hope and a confidence that You can bring us spiritual success again. In the strong name of Jesus. Amen.

1You can read more about Hippolytus at [http://www.britannica.com/biography/Saint-Hippolytus-of-Rome](http://www.britannica.com/biography/Saint-Hippolytus-of-Rome%20) and read some of his writings at: [www.earlychristianwritings.com/hippolytus.html](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Crevev%5COneDrive%5CDocuments%5CMy%20Documents%5CSermons%5C2019%20Sermons%5Cwww.earlychristianwritings.com%5Chippolytus.html). A complete list of who he thought was a part of the 72 can be found at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seventy_disciples>. While not the best source it does have a listing of the 72 and while it is controversial it does allow us at least to have a discussion of who was a part of the 72.

2For a good reading about the morality of England in the 18th century see - <http://www.albany.edu/scj/jcjpc/vol4is3/simpson.html>

3 Hannah Ball and Robert Raikes had already been starting Sunday Schools which by 1831 over 25% of the children were being taught how to read and write with the Bible being their main text book. Their teachings laid the ground work for what the LORD would do later through Wesley, Whitefield and others.