

## Rejected

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Merciful God,  
you have prepared for those who love you  
such good things as pass our understanding:  
pour into our hearts such love towards you  
that we loving you in all things and above all things  
may obtain your promises  
which exceed all that we can desire.

Our text may be found in Luke chapter 10 and verse 16:

**'Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me,  
and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me.'**

One of the painful things about growing up, one of the painful things about being an adult, is having to learn to cope with being rejected. Rejection takes many forms. Perhaps the first time a child meets rejection is the failure to get into the school of choice. Perhaps rejection comes first in the playground when the boy or girl you like tells you he or she doesn't want to be your friend. Perhaps rejection comes in the form of a messy divorce or separation when one of your parents leaves the family home and, for no good or real reason, you feel a part of the rejection. Whatever the cause, rejection is a part of life and one way we British traditionally learn to deal with the pain of being rejected is to cultivate a 'stiff upper lip'.

Today, I want us to reflect a little on the fact that we can reject God. Choice, the ability to choose, is fundamentally part of what it means for us as people who are made 'in the image of God' (Genesis 1 v27). The story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden neatly illustrates the fact that we can choose. Eve chooses to disobey God by taking and eating forbidden fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam chooses to disobey God by taking and eating some of the same fruit when offered it by Eve. So we can all choose. We can choose to listen to God and try to live our lives in the light of a relationship with God or we can choose to deny his existence and go our own sweet way, ignoring his presence in our lives. We can choose to share our experience of a real or living faith with others who in turn can choose to reject what we are telling them. And that my friends is precisely our text today: 'Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me.'

And the context ? Today's gospel passage is unique to Luke. The three synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke all tell of the mission of the twelve though John does not. But Luke alone relates the mission of the seventy. To the Jewish mind numbers are significant. To them, twelve represents the number of the tribes of Israel. Jacob/Israel had twelve sons and there were twelve tribes named after them. And your homework today is to see how many you can write down together after lunch then check out what you've written against Exodus 1 v1 - 5. Seventy represents the seventy elders chosen by Moses to help him in ruling the Children of Israel during their exodus from slavery in Egypt. Seventy reflects the number of members of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish council who met one night to condemn

Jesus to death for blasphemy. But most interestingly of all, seventy represents the names of the countries of the world as recorded in Genesis 10. So if the mission of the twelve is to the people of Israel, then the mission of the 70 is symbolic of the coming mission to the world and it is, therefore, no coincidence that the most universally minded gospel, that according to Luke, doctor Luke who shared Jesus' vision of taking the gospel to the Gentiles, should be the one to record this event which prefigured it.

The detailed instructions to these proto-apostles are interesting but let me just mention three details.

What did they wear on their feet ? Nothing ! These apostles went barefoot - 'no sandals' (v4) were to be taken by them.

They should be bringers of peace. On entering a house where they were to stay they should pronounce a blessing of peace - 'Peace to this house' (v5). Jesus the Messiah was not a warrior king. He entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday on a donkey. The battle to be fought was one of hearts and minds not blood and guts.

And thirdly the notion that the labourer was worthy of his hire - 'the labourer deserves to be paid' (v7). Priests are not paid much but they are paid. No one works for God to earn bankers bonuses but there needs to be enough to feed and clothe and house him/her. The joke you may like about Christian service is that the salary is nothing to shout about but the retirement plan is !

So there you have it. The seventy go out to prepare the way for Jesus. There is a real sense of urgency because Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem and he won't be passing this way again. The results are mixed. Some hear and receive the good news. For others, what these seventy folk do and say falls on deaf ears and goes unremarked. Always there is a choice.

And the choice I leave you with today is your choice and it's two-fold. Are you prepared to hear and receive the good news? And then if you are and if you do, are you then prepared to share it with others? Always there is a cost, the awful cost of rejection. It is a price that Jesus was/is willing to pay. But are you?

I have spoken in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,  
Amen.

*Preached at the Eucharist*

*St Bartholomew's, Dinard*

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G: Sermons 28 : Rejected

