

Sermon: Fourth Sunday after Pentecost (c) 7/6/25

Peace, Danville Pr. Lucy Kolin, preacher

Text: Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

As you can imagine, I'm traveling light these days, not wanting to carry much extra baggage as I move through familiar and unfamiliar spaces with a boot on my left foot and a walker in hand. Of course, that's because I'm dealing with a fractured left ankle. But honestly, I **generally** travel light, whether walking in my neighborhood or traveling by plane to places far away, unlike my younger daughter Megan when going to Bible camp for the first time. That day the walk uphill from the parking lot to the (of course!) furthest cabin was made more challenging by the two big suitcases she'd insisted on bringing...only things she needed, she said, although it seemed a pretty big inflation of the packing list Mount Cross had sent. When I began to pant and grumble, she simply said, "But, Mom, somebody might have forgotten something they needed and then I can give it to them." Love your neighbor...it's what Jesus and I taught her...but, really, couldn't we love and help them with less luggage?!

When in today's gospel we hear Jesus call 70 disciples to go out as his advance team to "every town and village he planned to go"...with a note that they were being sent out "like lambs into the midst of wolves," we can't help feeling a little anxious...for them...**and for us**, because we know we're meant to see **ourselves** in the story, too.

Jesus sends them out with no purse, no bag, no sandals (that would be a problem for Pastor Steve!), with just one another – two by two, a message of gospel peace, and the news that the kingdom of God has come near. Be honest, would **you** have said, "Okay, I'll go"?

We who live in today's world and in today's modern church evangelism programs would expect more...**much** more...maybe a manual or a three-day training, a sample "message," and perhaps a backpack with a debit card, a change of clothes, and sturdy shoes for walking those unpaved roads. Isn't it the least you could expect?

I mean, really, Jesus, what were you thinking? And really, company of 70, what were **you** thinking? But Jesus **was** thinking, not just of the mission he was sending them on but also of the message that mission would give, even before **his** arrival on the scene. And he certainly was realistic...he didn't think **everyone** would give his disciples a warm welcome.

But Jesus **did** send his disciples out with the essentials: a greeting of peace, an announcement of the kingdom come and coming, and the demonstrated willingness to build community, house by house, person by person...and then to leave, on to the next house, the next town.

Although, as Jesus predicted, not everyone or every town welcomed or received his disciples, many **did**. Yet Jesus didn't praise the head count the disciples gave or the statistics they provided when they returned. He asked them simply to go and be his ambassadors, his announcers, and trust God to do the rest. That's why, when the 70 returned and reported success (as well as some absolute failures), Jesus reminded them: It wasn't **their** power or powerful witness that opened hearts and minds. It was the power God through Jesus put into their hands that proved fruitful in so many places...though certainly not all...which is both reassuring and humbling for **us** who continue to go out and announce Jesus and the kingdom of God. That means we need not despair of our abilities or resources nor misread the response of communities and peoples as evidence of **our** power and ability...just rejoice that we have done as Jesus asked and trust the Spirit to work in people's hearts and minds...even after we've long left the scene.

So what about **us**? Three things: One, Jesus doesn't want God's great dream for the world to be held up by risk assessment. Today, because we earnestly want God's mission to succeed...especially in view of the terrible state of things in our country and the world, the Church and individual Christians often over-analyze and under-act. Remember the story that just precedes **today's** story in Luke, where different people say they want to follow Jesus but then ask for more time, delay or postpone to take care of suddenly-remembered details, to prepare their families and say goodbye. In each case, Jesus challenged their loyalties and readiness and demanded immediate obedience.

In today's story there **is** no delay; the 70 hear the call and go. Oh, I'm sure they had some niggling questions inside but somehow they were willing to take those doubts and questions **with** them on the journey and see what happened, trusting that something would be revealed to them, whether Jesus' mistakes or God's ability to open hearts and minds...**even their own**.

I think maybe there's one **more** thing to be learned from this story and applied to our **own** mission of being peace, announcing the Good News God intends for all. Faith, we've learned, is all about relationships...God with us, we with God, and we with one another as part of

God's family. How we act on those relationships is as important and revelatory as what we **say** about relationship.

Today's story of a bare-bones journey to announce the Good News is one that tells us we come to one another empty-handed and vulnerable. And yet we do not come emptyhanded. It's just that the gifts we bring are **God's own** gifts of peace and blessing, meant to be shared with all who would like to receive them, but never forced on them. Vulnerability on one side and hospitality on the other side are what opens the door for the message – no need to stick our foot in the door or to argue the Gospel case. Where people are not ready, simply walk away. God has so much more time and so many more ways to reach people. Maybe we've come at a time when they can't hear. Maybe somebody else will come at a time when they can...or speaking in a way they can receive. It's not about winning points, chalking up personal or denominational successes...it's simply about offering what **we ourselves** have received, what has changed **our** hearts and minds. As we so often say here at Peace at the close of worship, "There is no way to peace; peace is the way."

Bishop Desmond Tutu wrote, "God has a dream" for us...for every one of us. But God's dream is never a

coerced reality, only ever a marvelous promise and possibility for you and me, for our congregation, community, and world. When Jesus lived and died and rose again, the dream refused to die...but it is yet to be **totally** fulfilled in a new heaven and a new earth, in ways we cannot even begin to imagine.

Friends, you and I have been entrusted with that dream, have learned that story, have seen what happens when it gives birth to newness, peace, love, and hope in us. So let us not lose heart or wait for a better opportunity. Let us rather continue to go about our daily lives with simplicity, openness, generosity, and love to share the dream, the Good News of God's love and peace...to share it simply, eagerly, without judgment or coercion. Perhaps someone will say "Tell me more." Perhaps not. But, as you and I know, God's door is always open. And Jesus never wearies of standing outside our door until we say, "Come in." Maybe next time will be the time. Until then, go in peace, pray for those who for **whatever** reason – judgment, hatred, prejudice, fear – cannot open the door. Because God will be there waiting...with love and compassion when they do. Amen.