

## “YOU (YES, YOU) HAVE ALL YOU NEED TO SHARE FAITH”



**GOSPEL READING: Luke 10:1-11, 16-20** *Jesus commissions harvesters and laborers to go where he would go and do what he would do. Risking hardship and danger in exchange for the experience of great joy, they offer peace and healing as signs that the reign of God is near.*

After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. He said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this house!’ And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the laborer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; cure the sick who are there, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near.’ ”

“Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me.”

The seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!” He said to them, “I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

Sermon for Luke 10:1-11, 16-20  
By Pastor Jaime Larson-McLoone July 3, 2022



You (yes, you!) have all you need to share God's peace and healing...

There's this comedian I've heard a few times on the radio. I don't remember his name, and I only know one of his bits, but it goes like this: Have you ever (and then he offers some very specific and ridiculous scenario)? There's a dramatic pause, then this droll response. "I have."

And that has me wondering some things about us today.

Have you ever been sent out in a pair to proclaim God's kingdom? I have.

Have you ever been that person on the street corner asking everyone who passes by if they need prayers? I have.

Ministry experiments were a big part of several of my classes in seminary. In one of those classes, we studied this very passage from Luke's gospel, and then we

were sent out, two by two, to observe, learn about, or pray for the seminary's neighborhood. We went out, not really sure what we were doing. Not really sure

who or what we would encounter. I wonder if that's just a little of what these 70 disciples felt like.

Jesus sends them out with no provisions: no purse, no bag, no sandals. No stop at REI for the proper equipment. No religious tracts to hang on doorknobs. And Jesus tells them (like he told them in last week's gospel): This won't be easy. "I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves."

Jesus' followers have seen him rejected already, so they have some imagination for what lies ahead. Jesus has been rejected by an entire Samaritan village. He has been rejected by the frightened neighbors of a man he healed. A man he healed!

So imagine knocking on that first door and saying "peace to this house" to whoever is on the other side. "Whoever."

Jesus doesn't charge the disciples with studying the demographics and targeting neighborhoods most likely to respond positively to the good news of God's kingdom. He doesn't tell them to stop only in the homes and villages that look most receptive. There's no instruction to knock or don't knock based on some ancient version of yard signs or flags or whether their lawns are tidy.

God's peace is offered to everyone. God's kingdom is open to everyone.

So which house do you stop at first? My seminary classmate and I wondered something like that. From a list of ministry experiments, we had both picked what might have been the least comfortable: street-corner prayer.

I think we each assumed that the other had chosen this particular experiment confidently. In our talking, we discovered we were both feeling uncomfortable, anxious...walking up to strangers and talking about Jesus.

We decided to head to the nearby University of Minnesota campus and plant ourselves at a bus stop. On our way, we walked past a group of men doing some landscaping. Should we have stopped to pray for them, we wondered? Should we just head straight to the campus instead?

We decided to turn back, and we asked these men if they would like us to pray for them. They declined; told us they didn't believe in God. So we walked away.

Then we discussed: Should our departure have been a little ... friendlier? We went back and chatted with them for a few minutes about their work. It was weird. I wonder if any of them still tell this story, too.

But my classmate and I had noticed: Jesus doesn't instruct the disciples to call down judgment on those who reject them. Just like he didn't let James and John firebomb that unwelcoming Samaritan village last week. There are words of judgment in those verses our lectionary leaves out. But the disciples are not instructed to judge those who reject Jesus' message. They are not called to argue or get angry. They are not called to convince or convert.

They are simply to shake the dust off their feet. Because they are not sent out to proclaim judgment. They are sent out to proclaim peace.

Peace is the message we proclaim. Jesus sends us out not to conquer the world on his behalf, not to force people to conform to his ways, or our ways, but to offer peace.

My prayer partner and I shook off that first rejection and kept going. As we walked on, and when we arrived at that bus stop, some people received us, and some rejected us. I imagine the disciples had a similar experience. And yet, they don't return with stories of failure or rejection.

They don't come back telling wolf stories. They come back telling stories of joy: "Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!"

And Jesus cautions them: Don't boast because the wolves couldn't get to you. Don't rejoice because of what you've accomplished. Rejoice because you belong to God. Rejoice at what God is doing.

"I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning," Jesus tells the disciples. As they offered peace, as they healed people, as they shared meals and conversation, God was at work. Not just healing and comforting individual towns and families, but defeating the powers of evil.

My prayer partner and I - along with our classmates - returned with joy as well. Some people had rejected us. Some had shared very personal stories. One person even prayed for us, right there in the middle of the sidewalk. My classmates had similar stories, and we talked together about what God was doing as we had scattered in pairs around the neighborhood. We would probably never encounter any of these people again, yet God was doing something powerful.

Our work that day mattered not just for the sake of a grade or a learning experience. It mattered for the sake of God's reign. I wonder, how might we extend God's peace this week? The harvest is still plentiful.

As we celebrate our nation's independence, we have neighbors who are lamenting that what they hold as basic freedoms have been taken away or put at risk. We have neighbors who are celebrating that what they hold as basic freedoms have been protected. And we have neighbors whose complex feelings around the news of the past couple of weeks can't be captured in a pithy quote on a sign.

Into this reality, I wonder, where might Jesus be sending us to offer peace. I wonder where Jesus might be sending us with no purse, no bag, no sandals - no agenda but peace and healing. What might that look like?

I have been and will be praying about that. I hope you will join me. Because I trust that God can and will take our tiniest offerings of peace and multiply them. Multiply them in ways that have us answering those "have you ever" questions not with dry humor but with joy.

Have you ever gone out despite your fear and shared God's peace with your neighbors? I have.

Have you ever been completely surprised by what God can do with one little encounter? I have.

Have you ever been sent out by God, experienced rejection, and STILL come back rejoicing? I have.

Friends, this is the God we belong to. The God who nourishes us, blesses us, sends us out, and transforms us - and our world - in ways that leave us amazed and rejoicing.