

Who Me? Called & Sent  
Luke 10:1-11, 16-20  
Fourth Sunday After Pentecost  
July 7, 2019  
Pastor Dea Sharp, Pikes Peak UMC, Colorado Springs

**Luke 10:1-20 (NRSV) The Mission of the Seventy**

**10** After this the Lord appointed seventy<sup>[a]</sup> others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. **2** 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. **3** Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. **4** Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. **5** Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!' **6** And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. **7** 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. **8** Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; **9** cure the sick who are there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'<sup>[b]</sup> **10** But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, **11** '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.'<sup>[c]</sup>

The Lectionary doesn't include verses from Luke 9, of Jesus sending out the twelve disciples to proclaiming the Good News AS THEY are healing the sick and empowered with authority over demons. Their mission seemed to be a brief, but the symbolism can't be overlooked: twelve disciples, one for each tribe of Israel.

In today's reading, Jesus sends out 70 "others" (it says.)

The mission has broadened, and the number of missionaries goes beyond the original twelve.

Seventy was considered the number of gentile nations outside Israel.

At the very least 70 means a lot of people...sent to a lot of places.

And, this time, no one goes alone. The 70 went in pairs.

It's good to team up with someone to do the work that Jesus sends us to do.

There's plenty of work to do. Having a partner is helpful!

I find it interesting, that this first Sunday of July, the Sunday that UM pastors have been moved to new congregations, that THIS is the lectionary of the day. God's sense of timing is catchy!

Consciously, OR NOT, our expectations (and yes, I have self-imposed expectations about my ministry) place burdens on the clergy....that THEY'RE the *only ones* who can grow a local church and its ministries. Too often (I'm sure NONE of YOU think this) we think our pastor-leaders are smooth-talkin' sales people who are the only one who can get customers to "buy."

The laity do some of the "marketing" (the building looks good, the weeds are pulled, and sign is welcoming.)

But, then what? Do we fall into thinking that "selling" the Good News is too difficult?

Or that we're not gifted to do it?

It's important that we NOT think that clergy or "leadership" people are the ONLY ones who can share of the Good News with others.

All of us are people who are sent.

Jesus needs us.

The church needs us.

Believe or not, the world needs us to accept our role as those who are sent.

And just like the 70...we'll be *more* successful when we partner up with at *least one other person* to do the work Jesus is sending us to do.

Remember, too, that Jesus sends us into "every city and place where he himself was about to go." (v. 1)

I'm going to challenge us to consider that "someplace else," is somewhere other than where we already are.

We have some traveling to do.

Jesus was the TSA of his time, with specific instructions for HOW to travel.

He said, "Go light."

No multi-piece, matching baggage.

No campers or SUV's crammed with "stuff."

We are to travel really light.

We have a specific example of this in the Book of Acts, when the new church of Jesus Christ is depicted much like the people in the wilderness after the Exodus. They didn't have much "stuff" because people on the move can't carry a lot of stuff and get anywhere!

So, in Acts, we read that everybody sold their stuff, pooled their resources, and were able to fund the mission AND take care of one another.

What's more, that early church is depicted as people who are blown upon by the wind of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said that "wind" comes from "we know not where and sends us we know not where."

Those people were regularly infused by the Holy Spirit!

So, how is THAT pertinent for US?

Travel light. Okay.

Rely on others for hospitality. Got it.

But, more importantly than being able to be on the move with energy AND experiencing other's kindness, is to admit, better yet, *CLAIM WHO WE ARE!*

In our Book of Discipline, there are over 200 pages with descriptions about the different ministries of the UMC. One is the Board of Global Ministries, meaning domestic and foreign ministries.

And THAT'S just what Jesus had in mind.

He sent out the first twelve specifically to be domestic missionaries.

Then he sent teams of missionaries to foreigners beyond the boundaries of Israel.

In both dispatches, Jesus gives instructions to travel light and depend on others.

Those ideas are contrary to our cultural norms.

We're **good** at getting as much as possible.

We're **not good** at depending on anyone else.

But, throughout his ministry, Jesus emphasized that those norms lead to anxiety. Isaiah shared the same theme 600 years earlier!

If we're going to live the Global Ministries part of our church, AND allow ourselves to be sent out the way Jesus intends us to be sent out, we have to reconsider our norms.

Because Jesus' words are still true today: *"The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."*

Think about the Midwestern farmers who haven't been able to be plant due to the heavy rains this Spring. The harvest doesn't look plentiful in those places, yet, if we drove through our nation's farmlands, we'd still see those farmers out, tending to their fields. A farmer's care and perseverance are the cornerstones of the agricultural life of discipline and steady labor.

What do we need to do, to be as disciplined in our labor for the Lord, as farmers are, even in times of poor conditions?

First, will you say "Here am I, Lord, send **me**?"

The first apostles and then the next 70 that Jesus sent out went with his promises, and his authority over demons and his abilities to heal, help, and serve more people than ever.

With the persistence of a farmer, we HAVE gifts and abilities to GO, in Jesus name, to share the nearness of God's Kingdom.

And don't fall prey to Satan's misinformation.

Yes, the first people Jesus sent out were, if you will, the first clergy. They went to pastor and preach, to share the Sacraments and lead new Christian communities.

BUT, we'd be wrong if we continue to think that TODAY all those called and sent are JUST professional clergy.

Dear Ones, today's gospel reading is about you; believers baptized into the Body of Christ who have received the WIND of the Holy Spirit in us.

The task of telling the Good News to others is given to us all and we accomplish that task in lots of ways. Some of us do it quietly; others with a "wow" factor.

Some will speak it. Others will lovingly give care.

The central thing is that the task of showing Jesus to others is one of the main reasons we exist.

I'm not exaggerating!

When we grab onto the idea that each of us is created for a purpose, and that that purpose is in the mind of God, that's more important than any other purpose we have.

A second truth that we learn today is that we've ALL been "empowered"!

Take that as an assurance AND as a challenge.

We've got to shake off being passive!

Being introverted isn't an excuse.

Neither is saying, "It's not in my nature."

The Gospel assures us that we are all empowered to witness in the world.

And that empowerment is **not** the same as a natural talent.

Imagine that you find yourself at someone's sick bed.

Regretfully, many of you have had to do this.

Everything in you says, "run."

You're uncomfortable.

You don't know what to say.

You don't know what to do.

Yet you stay.

Maybe you hold their hand, just sit there.

Trust me: that action comforts and cheers the sick person.

You haven't used any "talent," but the power given to you by the Holy Spirit.

It's not a talent, but a *spiritual gift!*

*And WE'VE ALL GOT THEM!*

See, another problem, apart from thinking that witnessing and growing the church are tasks of the clergy, is that we don't recognize or activate our spiritual gifts because we think those gifts are supposed to be spectacular.

Yes, the 70 were given the power to cast out evil, but won't you please consider that by offering goodness and kindness YOU are able to do the very same thing? You are casting out evil!

Again, I am not exaggerating!

Practicing consistent compassion especially toward people we hardly know, or who aren't like us, and yes, even to people that repel us by their actions isn't easy. It'd be easier to lump them in a group, label them, send a check to their cause and stay away.

But Jesus, who we believe is still among us, continues to call us.

And send us.

And he empowers us.

We all have the call to do ministry.

We all have Spiritual Gifts!

In the coming weeks, I pray that we'll reflect, even pray about, what task, seemingly beyond anything we'd consider within our strength or talent (yes, outside our comfort zone,) does God want us to take on.

What is it?

You've got the strength of the Holy Spirit living within you.

What is it that God is calling you to?

Don't say "who me?"

Say "send me!"