

Sent

February 27th, 2022

Luke 10:1-11

10:1 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.

10:2 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.

10:3 Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves.

10:4 Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road.

10:5 Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!'

10:6 And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you.

10:7 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.

10:8 Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you;

10:9 cure the sick who are there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'

10:10 But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say,

10:11 '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.'

A few observations about our text this morning. This is, as I'm sure you heard, a story about disciples—so it is also a story about you. You'll remember a few weeks ago we read another story from Luke where Jesus recruits disciples along the Sea of Galilee. Remember the phrase that was used there—the disciples were “caught alive?” I hope all of you resonated at least a little bit that sense of being “caught alive” by the love of God. We are caught up in love, which holds all things together. But one thing you must know if you count yourself as a disciple of Jesus. All disciples are *caught*—and then you are *sent*. You are caught—then you are sent. You can't have one without the other. We always ask, “Do you go to church?” as though going to church were all there is to it. In a life of faith, we don't just go to church—we are sent from church. Sent out into the world to do something that God needs you to do.

It would be nice if we got full credit for just showing up. I don't know if you've noticed, but church is not a growth industry right now. Those of us who make the effort to show up at all are bucking the trend. So many “progressive-thinking” people have abandoned religion entirely. Shouldn't coming to church be enough?

Besides, there's so much *baggage* with being “sent.” None of us want to be associated with those Christians who go out and try to convert people. We respect people. We don't think they're bad or need Jesus to be eternally OK. And this idea of going two by two. Please tell me Rev. Lewicki does not expect me to go door-knocking like those dear sweet Jehovah's Witnesses. We feel sorry for those folks. We don't want to be them. Isn't it enough that I show up here, and that I'm trying to figure things out for myself?

I get that you don't want to be associated with narrow-minded judgmental evangelism. I get, too, that you probably don't feel like you have all the answers—or even any. That you're not sure which parts of this tradition you believe, that your faith burns hot and then runs cold, that many of you feel like if Peter and Paul were picking evangelism teams on the playground, they'd fight over who had to take you last. If you were sent out door to door to share the message of God's good news, it would be like... it would be like sending ... lambs in the midst of wolves.

The magnificent part of this story—the part that blows my mind, really—is that Jesus calls 70 people and send them out with... like... nothing. No training. No 12 week evangelism boot camp. Nothing. And who are these 70 people? They're not the 12 disciples. Honestly, if you read the Gospels, the disciples, who spend *all* their time with Jesus, don't have a clue what he's up to. So who are these 70? The B team? I imagine there's like a guy who kind of curiously hangs out on the margins of Jesus eating a fish sandwiches and picking the crumbs out of his beard and Jesus is like—"you, fish sandwich guy, you and this young man whose leprosy I just cured... you guys head out together. Go up the road for a day or so to a place I've never been and talk to people who know nothing about me and... you get to be the ones to talk to them about me. No money, no shoes, no nothing. Got it?... What's that? You don't feel ready? Of course you're ready. You've got all you need. You have two things to tell people: "peace to you." And "The Kin-dom of God is near. You'll be fine... or not."

Can you imagine yourself in their shoes? Well, don't look down. You're wearing them.

There is a message that all disciples of Jesus are asked to carry to the world. You may not feel like you'll be very eloquent, but you do know the message. That message is that love is the most powerful thing in all creation. The message is that we are to treat everyone with compassion—especially folks who hurting and sad; and even folks who are despicable and desperate need compassion. The message is that this Creation and every living thing in it is a sublime gift. The message is that shalom—peace mixed with justice—is God's intention for the world. The message is that we forgive others when they hurt us. The message is to care for each other, even that caring costs us dearly. The message is to reject the pursuit of wealth in favor of the communion of all living things. The message is to heal those who are sick. And feed those who are hungry. And house those who are without a home. The message that everyone is God's beloved child: trans kids are beloved; and Russian soldiers are beloved; and your uncle who watches Fox News is beloved; we are all God's beloved and we belong to God and to each other. You know the message. Every last one of you. And you know it is true. You've been

caught up in this message. You've taken it to heart. You believe it in the deepest place inside of you.

This message has to get out. It has to. Take a look around at the world we share—look around the world, look at our nation, look at our state of Georgia, look at DeKalb County, look at Medlock and your own neighborhood, look at your own family—when we do, it does not look like the message—this beautiful, holy, life-giving, life-saving message—is getting out.

The coming of God's kin-dom on earth as it is in heaven does not depend on you or me. None of us should have that kind of hubris. But perhaps, after hearing this text, you will remember that while it's not all up to you, there is something you are called to do. God catches you—and then God sends you out into the world with a message. What would it look like for you to bring that message to the places where it is most needed?

Are you sent to bring this message to Georgia lawmakers? Are you sent to the board meeting of the largest fossil fuel companies? Or the school board? Are you sent to the hospital, or the school, or your business, to the team you manage at work? Are you sent to bring the message to your own parents or children? "The Kin-dom of God has come near." "Peace to this house."

We're about to enter the season of Lent. It's a season of giving things up. But it's also a season of taking up practices that nurture our faith. Perhaps this is the season for you to consider how you are sent. Here's something specific that all of you can do. Take the two phrases Jesus sends us out with: "The Kin-dom of God has come near," and "peace to this house." Write them in your own words. "Justice and mercy have come near." "Beloved Community is all around us." "May everyone here know you are loved and free." Take those little, beautiful, charged phrases; put them in your pocket, send them out by text, speak them out loud... bear them with you every place God sends you. Share them. Share the good news.

