



Sunday July 3, 2022
Luke 10:1-11, 16-20 (Fourth Sunday after Pentecost)

Ascension Lutheran Church
Pastor Tony Acompañado

Throughout our lives things happen that leave a permanent mark – and after they happen, we’re never the same again. Some of these life-changing events have a negative impact on our lives – the death of a loved one, the disappointment of a failed relationship, suffering a chronic illness, battling an addiction, or being discriminated against. And yet, there are also people and events that change our lives in a positive way – graduating from college, getting a new job, taking the trip of a lifetime, receiving a get-well card, or having the love and support of a friend.

The disciples accompanied Jesus as he went around teaching from village to village. They were on the boat when he calmed the raging storm. They were there and saw the gratitude of a man once exiled because he had leprosy but now, he was healed. They were there and saw the joy on the face of the man whose once dead daughter was alive again and well. They had seen and heard so much while they accompanied Jesus, they would never be the same again.

In our Gospel reading today we hear about Jesus sending out 70 others with the same task – to share with others everything they had seen and heard about Jesus and the Kingdom of God. This story of Jesus sending out the 70 gives us a glimpse into what it looked like for those first followers of Jesus, and it’s an example how we too are being called and sent out to engage the world we live in.

But let’s be honest – this story doesn’t do a whole lot to make following Jesus sound all that wonderful – I mean c’mon Jesus – you’re kidding right!? The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few. Being sent out like lambs into the midst of wolves. Take nothing with you. Not being welcomed. Peace not shared. I don’t know about you but nothing about this sounds amazing or encouraging to me.

One of the first instructions Jesus gives is to travel light. He tells them not to take anything with them – no purse, no bag, no sandals, and greet no one on the way. Jesus wanted his disciples to be concerned about nothing else but the mission that he was sending them on. They were being sent out to meet the needs of others and remind those they’d met about God’s unfailing presence just as Jesus did. Their task was simple and straightforward.

Travelling light meant the 70 missionaries had to put their trust in God for their daily needs. Jesus was teaching them not to rely on their own resources, but to survive only on the goodness of God, through the hospitality and generosity of those they visited.

Do you see what Jesus is doing here? He’s establishing the connection between faith and action. He’s saying to them, “You aren’t being sent out just to tell people about faith in the living God – you’re also being sent out to show them what happens in your life when you really believe and trust. If you tell people about having faith in Jesus – about trusting God – but then live a life that demonstrates the opposite, no one is going to believe you, or follow me.”

It’s no different for us today. I wonder how many times a week, or even how many times a day our faith and trust in Jesus is weakened, or even reduced to nothing because we fail to recognize how deeply connected our faith is with our actions. Our words and our actions have the power to both reflect our faith in Jesus, and just as easily deny our faith in Jesus.

I wonder; if like me, you’ve ever reflected on a time of great shame in your life because of a certain way that you acted. I’ve certainly had more of these moments than I want to admit. The ones we reflect on, and it becomes clear that the way we’ve acted goes against what we know Jesus expects of us.

It’s easy to confess our faith in Jesus one moment and then have our un-Christ like actions deny that same faith in the next. By telling the 70 not to worry about food and clothing but to trust in God – Jesus is telling them not just to tell people about faith, but he also wants them to see in their own lives what it means to trust God even for the simplest things, like food and clothing.

Jesus then goes on to give them another instruction – to remain in the same house and not move around from house to house. In other words, he’s telling these disciples to accept whatever’s offered to them and not go shopping around for something better. Jesus doesn’t want them to get distracted by things that take them away from the important task of sharing the good news about the Kingdom of God.

Can you imagine how offensive it would’ve been if the disciples began changing homes because they were dissatisfied – perhaps the children were too noisy, the bed was too uncomfortable, the food wasn’t to their liking, or the house was too messy. This would’ve sent a completely different message than the one Jesus had hoped for. But



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all this leads to an underlying point. The gospel is shared in the midst of a personal relationship. The disciples were to stay a while with the one family and in the one community to which they were sent – to get to know people and be concerned about their needs.

These disciples weren't being sent to proclaim the love of God in a fly-by-night manner – here today and gone tomorrow. No, Jesus knew that for many people it would take a long time to comprehend the meaning and importance of the gospel for their lives, and so the 70 are encouraged to not only talk about the love of Jesus, but also to be the love of Jesus in the community they were visiting.

What Jesus is essentially saying is, "Get to know people and through your friendship with them, let them see how your faith really makes a difference in your life. Let them see the gospel in action for themselves through everything you say and do."

And it's the same for us. Can you imagine how ineffective our faith witness would be if we said, "God loves you and wants to be in relationship with you, but please don't waste my time, I'm not interested in knowing that your mom died last week, or that you're unemployed and struggling to make ends meet, or that you're a stranger in a new place or new church and feeling lost."

As hard as we may find it to love certain people, unless we do, we do nothing but stand in the way of God's work. Jesus reminds us that the good news of God calls for both words and actions of love. When Jesus sent out the 70 to share the gospel, he gave them a specific message to tell – they were to say clearly, "The Kingdom of God has come near. God has provided an answer to the troubles that plague your lives. God has sent Jesus to bring salvation."

This is why the personal connection of a loving relationship is so important, because when someone feels that they're being listened to and cared for, and that someone is sympathetic to their situation, the troubled person also hears, "Jesus died on a cross to give you forgiveness and the reassurance that no matter what may be going on in your life, God still loves you and is always with you."

And this is something that we all need to hear again and again, especially when too often our words have spoken boldly about our faith in Jesus, only to have our actions reveal how little we've let our faith change our lives. When we too hear those words, "You are loved. I am here. You are not alone." Then we experience for ourselves the love and forgiveness of Jesus, and from this our desire to share this good news is refreshed to share it with others.

When Jesus sends us out he intends to use us for something amazing. Even in our ordinary, everyday lives, Jesus is working out some larger matters. We look around our church and maybe we see ordinary people, unspectacular routines, people with all kinds of troubles. And yet what Jesus sees is heaven and earth being transformed through us. Jesus calls us and sends us out to be part of his revolution to defeat the powers of death and evil. And sadly, we can't always see it, because too often we're caught up in the everyday, ordinariness of life.

Yet in us – in our gathering together, adult education and Sunday School classes, passing the offering plate, sitting at the bedside of someone who's sick or injured, or taking a meal to someone – the reign of God is taking shape. God sends out ordinary people like us to be witnesses that God's kingdom is breaking into the lives of people – through us.

What I find most amazing about today's gospel is the willingness of those Jesus sends out to be dependent on others. Think about it: no purse, no bag, no sandals, and more importantly, no guarantees about how they'll be received. All they have is the promise of Jesus to go with them, to do great things through them, and to bring them back home again. And I wonder if that can be enough for us too.

My friends, I wonder, if like the 70 others that Jesus sent out, we too could allow our faith and trust in Jesus to guide us and lead us to the places and the people to whom Jesus will break into their lives through us. And when we do, I wonder what kind of permanent mark you will leave on the lives of those you encounter. Thanks be to God. Amen!