

Weekend of Sunday, July 7, 2019
4th Sunday after Pentecost/Lectionary 14/Proper 9/Year C
Primary Text: Luke 10:1-11; 16-20
Sermon Title: “The Core of our Calling”

Theme

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.

Text

¹After 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. ²He 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. ³Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. ⁴Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. ⁵Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this house!’ ⁶And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. ⁷Remain 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. ⁸Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; ⁹cure the sick who are there, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ ¹⁰But 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.’ ”

¹⁶“Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me.”

¹⁷The seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!” ¹⁸He said to them, “I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. ¹⁹See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you. ²⁰Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

Sermon

The title of the sermon today is, "The Core of our Calling" and what is behind that is the idea that to be Christian means that we are to be evangelists. That is so important that maybe I should repeat that.

I think that at **the core of being a Christian is to be an evangelist.**

I know, I know, these are the thoughts that are racing through your head:

- "I don't have the spiritual gift of evangelism. That gets me off the evangelism hook and puts someone else on who is, you know, gifted by God for the work of evangelism." And there is a tangential thought – "Evangelism is the pastor's job."
- "Though I am deeply spiritual and a devoted Christian, my faith is a deeply personal thing that I don't think should be shared."
- "I don't have all the answers or the right words to say."

Did I nail your thought? Maybe not. Google "excuses not to evangelize" and there are innumerable excuses people use to not share their faith at all.

And while I grant you that Jesus is speaking to his disciples in this passage, he is speaking not to the Twelve, those few who get most of his attention. He is speaking to the Seventy, which may have included the Twelve, but undoubtedly also included his second tier of men *and women* who have dedicated their lives to following him and who have been doing just that for some time. To the Seventy Jesus said, ³"Go on your way."

He also gave specific information on how they were to go on their way, which I would like to comment on.

I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves.

It may be hostile, but you are not to return hostility but remain passive (and peaceful, which I will get to in a moment).

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

I mentioned this in the Daily Word that you might have read Saturday morning. We are not to prepare to do evangelism. Evangelism opportunities will present themselves.

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

This is actually a good rule of thumb for life. Cover yourselves with an aura of peace. This will be difficult for those who have trouble finding peace and maintaining peace about their being.

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

I take Jesus to mean that if you are received with that peace you present, continue. But if there is hostility, then time to move on.

⁷Remain 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.

As long as that peaceable environment prevails, stay. And let me add my own thought here. Move on before that peaceful environment changes. Don't wear out your welcome.

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

As an ambassador for Christ, be gracious.

⁹cure the sick who are there,

"Cure the sick?!? I can't cure people!" Relax, you don't know what God can do through you. Hear the cries of the sick and pray for them. Their cure does not depend on you anyway.

and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'

Jesus said that when you are present in his name, the Kingdom of God has come near! He must have a lot of confidence in us! No, rather, he has a lot of confidence in what the Holy Spirit can do through us.

¹⁰But 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.’ ”

Finally Jesus said that if anyone refuses the Gospel, don't let it bother us. We have done our job of sewing seed, and it is time to move on. We are not responsible for the harvest anyway.

Let me be clear, Jesus was not speaking to a limited number of commissioned officers of the Gospel. He was speaking to the 1st Century equivalents of you and me, we who hang around his church and love to hear his word preached and eat his meal of remembrance and forgiveness.

Now it is true, some are given the spiritual gift of evangelism. They are more articulate, and add to that their experience and willingness to be used in that way, they can be phenomenal at what they do. But they aren't my responsibility today, *you are*.

I would like to suggest that the kind of evangelist you can *effectively* be, is someone who lives a life consistent with your beliefs and then simply *is* available to tell others what God revealed in Jesus Christ *has done* in your life. That's all. Allow me to give you some examples:

The Jesse's have always given thanks in prayer before a meal – always, even at a restaurant. Do you do that? Could you do that? I can't tell you how many comments we have gotten – strangers have come up to us and said how nice it was to see a family praying together. I didn't have to say anything.

Vocationally, I go to a lot of hospitals and nursing homes to visit those under my care. But in addition to the member I am visiting, I often visit with the other in the room or in the hall or elevator or wherever. I call that a ministry of presence. Jesus spoke of bringing peace to every house. We can do this just by being Christ for others in any and every situation.

I have corrected financial transactions. Just last Friday morning I picked up my car from being serviced and I had one of those "My Valley Deals" coupons, except

mine had expired which means it was only worth half the face value. The guy checked me out and said I was paid in full, and when I told him to read closer, he said, "Dude, you should have gone on down the road." And I told him that would not be godly behavior pleasing to the Lord, to which he asked, "You a Christian?" And when I answered yes, he said, "Yea, me too." Nothing more, nothing personal, no testimony, just was acting with godly integrity and mentioning why. You can do this, and probably do.

Now I have taken on a project for us, us being Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church – did you know "Evangelical" is part of this church's real name?

There is a project going on right now that I have signed us up for. It's called SaturateUSA and is an effort to get a DVD and tract into every home in the United States. There is a video and more information on the Saturate USA website, but honestly, this is so easy I am not going to make you sit through it.

We have been assigned the area where we are sitting right now, east to South Schenley, West to South Meridian and north to through the Kirkmere community. All total, it's about 1041 households, but more than half of them are Brandywine and I have a plan to take care of them if the management will let me.

So that means I need another 500 or so of these packets hung on door knobs. You don't have to knock on doors or talk to people although there are no rules against being all those things Jesus mentioned earlier.

Now we have an average worship attendance of about 250 per weekend. I could just assign a couple of them to each of you and let you go, but before I do that, I would like you to volunteer. After that we will see what is required. This is a very simple way to get our name and a DVD about our Lord Jesus to households who are literally our neighbors. Jim Clark has already had one delivered to his home. Will you take 15 minutes and do the same for our neighbors?

Raisin' the Bar Challenge

God loves us and all people and provides for all our needs all the time and all God asks of us is that we be available to share the Good News of the Gospel to others who have never *effectively* heard it before. They belong here. We belong together.

Maybe it will be through you that the Gospel will finally break through. Do not be silent. You are an evangelist. It is part of your DNA as a Christian. Go on your way.

Prayer

LORD God and Father of our Lord Jesus, you love us and provide for everything we need and ask nothing in return. This is simply your grace. But to say that nothing is required of us as our response to your grace is to cheapen your grace. Inspire us to be evangelists for the Gospel where we are and with whom we find ourselves. We pray this in the name of the one who sends us. Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen