

The Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

Proper 9 Year C

July 3, 2016

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2 Kings 5:1-14

Psalm 30

Galatians 6:(1-6)7-16

Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer. Amen.

Jesus sent out seventy people in pairs empowering them to bring peace, to cure the sick and to proclaim the kingdom of God. Initially, he sent them to every town and village where he intended to go, saying, "The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few." I believe this particular story in the life of Jesus and the early Christian Church has implications for our own communities of faith today.

Jesus came among us to preach, to teach and to heal. He came to reconcile human beings to the God of all creation and to each other. Jesus reminded his followers that God's love surpasses their understanding and the importance of living into that love by engaging the ministry of justice and mercy for all. Jesus said to the seventy, and in our own day he says to us, "Go."

The mission of the seventy is no mission I could ever imagine accepting. It sounds more like orders received from central command on the series "Mission Impossible." "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." No provisions, not even a decent pair of walking shoes, danger abounds, and by all means, don't stop to ask for directions.

Like the story from Luke last week, Jesus points out that our tendency is to put all kinds of stipulations in place before we feel secure to go out and witness to what we know about God and to how we have experienced God's love. While last week was a list of things *to do* before accepting the mission, this week is a list of things we think we *need to have* before accepting the mission.

While Jesus' demands may seem rather extreme, they do make us pause and think -- and maybe that is exactly Jesus' point. Stop and think what is it we think we need? What are those things we suppose we just have to have for a life lived in service to Christ? Are you a traveler . . . or a tourist in Jesus' call for mission?

In his book **Hidden History: Explaining Our Secret Past**, historian Daniel Boorstin writes that there is a difference between a traveler and a tourist. Throughout the centuries, travelers were those interested in unfamiliar settings and wild encounters that enlarged the traveler's perspective. "The traveler was active; he went strenuously in search of people, of adventure, of experience," Boorstin writes.

But tourism is a spectator sport full of contrived, prefabricated experiences.

"The tourist is passive; he expects interesting things to happen to him. He goes sightseeing."

The root words for *travel* and *tourist* informed Boorstin's study. "Travel" comes from the same word as *travail*, meaning trouble, work, or even torment. A traveler takes risks, plunges into diverse cultures, and seeks to learn local customs. Unplanned experiences are the traveler's norm, sometimes involving challenging exploits. Travelers eat whatever food is placed before them. They aim to learn as much of the language as possible. Shopping for souvenirs plays no part in their ventures.

But "travail" and sacrifice are not part of the tourist's itinerary. The word "tour," from the Latin *tornus*, literally means "one who goes in circles." A tourist is a pleasure seeker who passes through different exotic experiences only to return to a comfortable bed at night. Insulated from the noise, the smells and the local people, a tourist's "circle" is complete once he is back home unpacking mementos and photos.

So, on this journey of life that God has set us on, we each need to ask ourselves, "Am I an engaged traveler or merely a tourist passing through?"

This intentional empowering and sending out reminds the church today that we need to be engaged in the same empowerment and reconciling activity. Jesus in sending out the seventy warned them that this ministry was not easy. Their commission was to share the good news of God's redeeming work and not just be people pleasers. "See I am sending you out as lambs among wolves." One might assume that in this age of social media spreading the message has become easier. Yet, in our day the message is more likely to encounter indifference than rejection. While technology is remarkable and can broaden access

to people, it inhibits authentic relationship with each other. Faced with this challenge, how do we engage this work today in our world?

Not long ago, when our Presiding Bishop Michael Curry was at the St. Paul's Cathedral Church, he spoke to all at the service of how the Episcopal Church is called to be a part of the "Jesus Movement". Shortly after, I had shared this message with all of you. I would like to share this with all of you again as I truly believe that this is exactly what Jesus is calling us to in our own ministries here in our own church and our ministries out into the world.

Presiding Bishop Michael B. Curry: "A Word to the Church"

God came among us in the person of Jesus of Nazareth to show us the Way. He came to show us the Way to life, the Way to love. He came to show us the Way beyond what often can be the nightmares of our own devising's and into the dream of God's intending. That's why, when Jesus called his first followers he did it with the simple words "Follow me."

"Follow me," he said, "and I will make you fish for people."

Follow me and love will show you how to become more than you ever dreamed you could be. Follow me and I will help you change the world from the nightmare it often is into the dream that God intends. Jesus came and started a movement and we are the Episcopal branch of the Jesus movement.

Bishop Curry in his address also told this story:

A few years ago I was in a coffee shop in Raleigh, North Carolina, just a few blocks away from our Diocesan House there. While in line I started a conversation with a gentleman who turned out to be a Mennonite pastor. He had been sent to Raleigh to organize a church in the community on the streets without walls. As we were talking over our coffee, he said something to me that I have not forgotten. He said the Mennonite community asked him to do this because they believed that in this environment in which we live, the church can no longer wait for its congregation to come to it, the church must go where the congregation is.

Now is our time to go. To go into the world to share the good news of God and Jesus Christ. To go into the world and help to be agents and instruments of God's reconciliation. To go into the world, let the

world know that there is a God who loves us, a God who will not let us go, and that that love can set us all free.

This is the Jesus Movement, and we are The Episcopal Church, the Episcopal branch of Jesus' movement in this world. God bless you, and keep the faith!

I believe Jesus knew what he was doing when he sent the seventy out in pairs instructing them to engage others in relationship as a sign of God's kingdom. I believe that by being a part of the "Jesus Movement" we are also today sharing in the work that Jesus called the 70 disciple to do.

And so how do we bring the "Jesus Movement out into the world?

By going out into the streets of the communities by sharing our stories and the good news of God and Jesus Christ.

By going into our hospitals and nursing homes by being Jesus' hands and feet and to those by showing compassion and healing for those who are struggling.

By going into our work places and schools and by example sharing the hope of Christ to all.

After Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension, the good news of God's reconciling work depended on a network of people who were witnesses to what God had done. If Jesus had not empowered other disciples to go and proclaim God's kingdom, this important message may well have been silenced. But Luke in both his Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles focused on the harvest and the call of laborers to engage the reconciling work of God's kingdom. Proclaiming the kingdom is a communal and relational activity to which the whole body of Jesus' followers had been commissioned. For Luke this proclamation of the message began when Jesus commissioned seventy and sent them out. He sent them out to share in pairs as a communal activity in order the spread the good news of God's love, mercy and justice.

Jesus sends the seventy not just to see the places Jesus will visit but to be ministers of peace and the means of healing and reconciliation for those they encounter. The work Jesus entrusts to the seventy-two he has now entrusted to us, his church of today. The work is not a pleasure cruise or a comfortable "circle" we merely "tour"; the work of Jesus, the work of our baptisms, the work that begins and ends at this Eucharistic table, calls us to be engaged with one another as a means of support, reconciliation and

peace. The work of the "traveling" disciple is to seek peace in the midst of conflict; to bring the light of compassion into the darkest of nights; to bring healing and wholeness to the hurting, the fallen, the lost, the desperate, and the grieving. And as we strive for justice and peace in our world, those whose lives are impacted realize the power of God's reign to change lives and change the world we live in. The harvest remains plentiful. The laborers in the harvest continue across the ages to be empowered to share the reconciling message of God's love. Go therefore...join with others in the power of the Spirit spreading the good news of God's kingdom. Go!

Let us pray. Almighty God in your name you've urged us to go and proclaim your love throughout the world. Empower us with your spirit that we like the 70 may proclaim your peace and reconciling love in our world. We pray in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

Amen!!

Resources used for this sermon:

Adapted from "Tourist and traveler" by Peter W. Marty, **The Christian Century**, April 27, 2016.