

## Rejoice In Your Call

July 4, 2010

Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

<sup>1</sup>After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. <sup>2</sup>He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. <sup>3</sup>Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. <sup>4</sup>Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.

<sup>5</sup>"When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' <sup>6</sup>If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you. <sup>7</sup>Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.

<sup>8</sup>"When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. <sup>9</sup>Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you.' <sup>10</sup>But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, <sup>11</sup>'Even the dust of your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God is near.'

<sup>16</sup>"He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me."

<sup>17</sup>The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name."

<sup>18</sup>He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. <sup>19</sup>I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. <sup>20</sup>However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

**This is the Word of God and It can be trusted. Thanks be to God.**

Let us Pray:

*On this Independence Day we are reminded of all those who have sacrificed for our freedom, following the example of your Son, Jesus Christ. Let us not take our freedom, both physical and spiritual, for granted. May we always remember that our freedom was purchased with a very high price. Our freedom cost others their very lives.*

*Lord, today, bless those who have served and continue to give their lives for our freedom. With favor and bounty meet their needs and watch over their families.*

*Help us to live our lives in a way that glorifies you, Lord. Give us the strength to be a blessing in someone else's life today, and grant us the opportunity to lead others into the freedom that can be found only in knowing Christ.*

*May the mediations of our hearts and the words of my lips be pleasing to you this day, O Lord. Amen!*

I mentioned earlier this morning that you were going to have a pop quiz today. We've been studying some very interesting scriptures over the last 4 weeks but it is not by random selection that these verses have been chosen for the Sundays following Pentecost. We've moved into Ordinary Time and have begun to reflect on some of the teaching that Christ offered his disciples and in turn offers each of us. If we randomly select the teachings of Christ to be studied during this time, we run the risk of missing some very important themes and connections. Choosing the teachings randomly would be as effective as taking a mathematics book and randomly choosing sections to be covered. Without some basis or underlying construct to guide us, the material would become scattered and nonsensical at best.

The same is true for our Liturgy. Those who selected the readings for the Liturgical Years had a purpose and a reason for choosing the Scriptures for each of the Christian Seasons. The readings we have encountered since entering into Ordinary Time are no exception, so let's see if we can reconstruct the placement of the last four readings from our Liturgy based on the key "nugget" phrases we have pointed out over the last four weeks.

Before you I have the dates for the past four Sundays (June 6, 13, 20 and 27), as well as four key verses with their scripture references removed. I would like a volunteer to place the key verses in order from first to last. (Wait for volunteer, prompt and encourage, allow input from congregation).

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What do these four verses have in common? (Again wait for response, prompt and encourage, allow input from congregation). In essence each of these individuals we have met have encountered the living Christ, have found healing and forgiveness in some form or fashion and have been called *not to follow him*, but rather have been called *to go and tell others what God has done for them*. Each of us today have a similar calling on our lives and that is to tell others what God has done for each of us. Some call this our testimony, others may down play it a bit and refer to it as simply God's blessing or deliverance, regardless of what we call the experience, each of us has an experience that is worth telling and for those of us who have met the Risen Savior personally have a story to tell and a hope to offer those who are seeking hope in a lost and dying world.

People in our world today are hungry for something more than they have and many have no ability to verbalize what it is that they seek. It is our responsibility to share with them the teachings of Christ and if I may be so bold as to offer up a bonus question to our quiz this morning, "What is the theme that underlies all that Christ teaches us?" (Again wait for response, prompt and encourage, allow for input from congregation). Christ came with a *radically inclusive message of love* and that is what so many people today are seeking; to be included and to be loved!

Today's reading offers for us again a way to respond to those who are seeking and to those who reject the teachings that Christ offers. It may seem harsh, but we cannot reach everyone; we cannot be responsible for the world in its entirety. To even begin to think that we can take on such a responsibility is tiresome and

overwhelming. Who then can we reach; who are we responsible for? (Again wait for response, prompt and encourage, allow input from congregation). We are responsible for those that God places in our path, the path that we pray about each week; the path that marks God's Will and Way for our lives. It is more than just a symbolism of comfort offered to you each week; it is a description of our life's journey together. It is our prayer each week that God will make our paths esthetically pleasing and clear of debris, so much so that we can't help but follow it because of the beauty it encompasses, but the hard facts are that life is not always beautiful and free of debris and we must be prepared to encounter these obstacles when we are faced with them or else we may become discouraged and disheartened in our calling.

The very first verse of our reading this morning tells us that Jesus sent his disciples out into the world. “. . . the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.” (v. 1) It is comforting this morning to know that Jesus is sending his followers “where he intended to go.” Many read this as Jesus sent them as an advance party to prepare the way for his coming; reminiscent of the calling that John the Baptist had on his life as he went about preaching "After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. (Mark 1:7) But we can also read this verse in another respect. We also read it as Jesus is not asking us to do anything that he himself wouldn't do or also – just in case we really screw things up – Jesus is not asking us to do something that he is not willing to come along afterwards and make right. In either respect, we are called to go ahead of Christ; following the path that God has laid out before us and we are called to do so with the ease and comfort that Christ is right behind. In other words, God has your back and if God's in it, then there ain't nothin' to worry about. Even when we make mistakes, God is there to make things right. Don't get me wrong, we are not called to be reckless, that kind of line of thought is irresponsible, but we are called to do our best to carry out God's Will and Way for our lives. We are, however, human, and mistakes are bound to be made. We should take responsibility for them and trust that God can and will make things right; we are not just to leave a path of destruction for others to have to deal with.

In light of the world we live in, we often encounter slogans that entice us to buy a particular product or to join a particular group. The Army's, “Be All You Can Be” and McDonald's, “I'm Loving it” are familiar slogans to many of us. Verses 2 and 3 offer us two very familiar slogans used by many church leaders today. Verse 2 states, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." We are reminded in verse 2 that we are not winning souls for Jesus, but rather that our souls already belong to God. The work we are called to do is to bring to God what already belongs to God. All of humanity belongs to God and we are called to reintroduce humanity to their Creator. My mother reminded me of this when she slipped into conversation this week, very graciously I might add, that my sexual orientation was not something for her to judge but rather was “between me and my Creator.” Now exactly what is an individual suppose to take away from this? Where is God in all of this? Honestly, I perceive

it to be reflective of what Christ teaches each of us and that is her response was given with a genuine regard to the radically inclusive message of love that God offers each of us, not only to a few. Each of us here today, as well as each and every individual we encounter belongs to God; is a creation and reflection of our Creator and should be treated as such.

Verse 3, “Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves” reminds each of us that we do live in a dangerous world and is often quoted by church leaders at the end of a particularly difficult church meeting. We are warned in verse 3 that we should approach this world with a little common sense precaution. That is, we should not be naïve about the world in which we live. People are going to try to cheat you, steal from you and hurt you at every turn whether intentionally or not because that is simply the world we live in. How we respond to this world says much about our character and our relationship with our God. We must forever keep this in mind as we encounter those individuals that God places in our lives. Each and every person under each and every circumstance has a call by God to bring love into this world and we are called to do so, as we stated last week, with character and grace; just as Jesus did in his travels amongst those who rejected him.

In reading verses 4 through 11, we are given an account of the lifestyle of a traveling teacher – preacher – healer. Some of you here today may write off what I’m about to say because you have convinced yourselves that you do not fall into either of these three categories, but be cautious of that line of thinking. As members of the ICCA and even more so as members of the body of Christ, we are called to what we often refer to as the *Priesthood of All Believers*. Each of us here today are called in some form or fashion to carry the message of Christ to all, yes all, we encounter and that makes each of us teachers, preachers and healers in God’s Kingdom. We are reminded in verse 4 that we are to travel minimally. For us, this states that we are to leave our own baggage behind when delivering the Word of God to the people of God. We are to rely wholly on the hospitality of others. “The interplay between the offering of hospitality and the offering of peace, providing healing, and proclaiming that the Kingdom of God has come near is what is detailed in these verses. Where there is hospitable receptivity – blessings can be offered. Where there is no welcome, there can be no blessings offered.” (David Ewalt, [www.HolyTextures.com](http://www.HolyTextures.com))

This is why so many in the LGBTQ Population and others have been unable to find reconciliation with their Creator. If a Community of Faith or an individual is not able to welcome people into their lives based solely on the realization that we are all God’s Children, then how in the world are people going to be blessed? How should we expect the teenage boy who has all the love, excitement and passion for his boyfriend to also find that same love, excitement and passion for Christ if we condemn what he has already come to know and trust? If a man or woman is told that their earthly passions are invalid, then how should we ever expect to validate their relationship with Christ? We can’t. And so we must foster a community – a population, if you will, of love and acceptance; one that will foster the blessings of God through hospitality and receptivity. Jesus instructs us to take back our greeting of peace and shake the dust off our feet when we are denied hospitality.

This has been the case for far too long against the LGBTQ Population, it is time that we take back our greetings of hospitality from those who reject us in the name of Christ and redirect our blessings on those who are eager to receive. We are called to redirect our energy from forcing those who reject us to accept us to teaching those who have been rejected that God does love them and accepts them, regardless of how the world has treated them.

Jesus said, *those who listen to you listens to me; those who reject you rejects me; but those who reject me are rejecting more than just me, they are also rejecting the One who sent me.* (v. 16) The bond spoken about here speaks to the interpersonal bond of trust and loyalty that is expected between Jesus and those who follow him; it is the same bond that already exists between Jesus and the One who sent him.

This bond is a crucial prerequisite for being sent out and for the results that are reported in the verses that follow. The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." (v. 17) *In Your Name* does not mean simply speaking Jesus' name out loud. It means, "in your honor," or "worthy of you." That is, 'by being loyal and true to the bond between us, between us and our Creator, we have done deeds that are worthy of you.' (David Ewalt, [www.HolyTextures.com](http://www.HolyTextures.com)) Jesus validates in verse 18 their joy by responding that all of creation has been changed through their loyalty to serve, "I [Jesus] saw Satan fall like lightening from heaven."

We close our reading with a few words of encouragement and caution this morning with verses 19 and 20. "I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." We are cautioned not to read verse 19 without going on to read the "However;" the "But," if you will, that begins verse 20. Verse 19, in all of its grandeur is not the point to our mission rather it is verse 20 that speaks to our purpose and call. "The joy in following Jesus is NOT in the results; the joy is in our relationship with him." (David Ewalt, [www.HolyTextures.com](http://www.HolyTextures.com))

It is true that Jesus has given each of us a call and a mission, but we should not lose our focus. If there is no welcoming receptivity, the mission cannot succeed and if the mission does succeed, it is because of the authority, power and honor of Jesus working through us, not in our abilities alone. Our call is to press on in light of rejection or acceptance; we are not to be distracted by either. Credit for our success all belongs to God; not in anything that we ourselves have done. Rather we are to say focused on our relationship with God which has our name written in the palm of God's Hand. (David Ewalt, [www.HolyTextures.com](http://www.HolyTextures.com))

Amen.

*(Special thanks to David Ewalt for his inspiring exegesis of Luke 10:1-11, 16-20 and for the power and promise of Christ in our lives who has made these ideas applicable to not only our Community of Faith, but to all of God's children.)*