

## **Fourth Sunday after Pentecost – July 3, 2022**

### **Luke 10:1-20**

10 After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> Go on your way; I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. <sup>4</sup> Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals, and greet no one on the road. <sup>5</sup> Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this house!’ <sup>6</sup> And if a person of peace is there, your peace will rest on that person, but if not, it will return to you. <sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; <sup>9</sup> cure the sick who are there, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ <sup>10</sup> But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, <sup>11</sup> ‘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.’ <sup>12</sup> I tell you, on that day it will be more tolerable for Sodom than for that town. <sup>13</sup> “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. <sup>14</sup> Indeed, at the judgment it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than for you. <sup>15</sup> And you, Capernaum,

will you be exalted to heaven?

No, you will be brought down to Hades.

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

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

**It's no secret almost all of us are tired.**

**Almost all of us are frustrated. Exasperated with the world we live in and the direction things keep heading.**

**And when we are tired of our fellow human beings who oppose us and thwart us at every turn, advice arises from this Scripture that can feel like such a relief.**

**Even the dust that clings to your feet from the land of those who reject you, wipe it off in protest and be done with it.**

**It sounds so freeing.**

**You just don't have to deal with \*those people\* anymore.**

**Go, be carefree and get on your way.**

**But I don't think it's that easy. In such polarized and divisive times, I've heard this scripturally-based advice a lot more than I used to. Heck, I've doled it out myself --even to myself --on occasion.**

**But woe to you and me, I'm afraid, when we begin to exercise this verse, or a paraphrase thereof as is commonplace, as a license to stop caring. Woe indeed when**

**it becomes a declaration of self-righteousness and triumphalism, smug satisfaction I'm right and they're wrong. They'll get theirs.**

**But doesn't Jesus go on to say just that? His woes and condemnations are for communities filled with hypocrites, who want to rest on their laurels and become blind to the reality that they are guilty of greater sin than their centuries-long enemies.**

**But consider the messenger. It is God himself who pronounces these warnings. And that's what they are is warnings. This is what will be if you stay on the path you're on and don't turn around and go the complete opposite direction. And as with James and John who we heard Jesus rebuking in last Sunday's passage from Luke when they offered to call down hellfire, we are not appointed to be Jesus' enforcers and bodyguards.**

**Yes, we are free. But not to stop caring about and sharing God's love with all people. We are free from having**

**to execute God's righteous anger toward the injustice of this world. God is perfectly capable of that.**

**The marching orders are pretty clear in this message Jesus gives to the 70-some he sends in his name. Travel light. Limit the baggage you carry along with you. Keep your focus steady. Not everyone will welcome you with open arms... most in fact won't. But don't let it get to you. You are sent to carry a message and that message is Good News. You are to say "Peace to you" and "The Kingdom of God has come near to you." Be content with what is offered you as a guest and don't look for greener grass on the other side of the fence.**

**Luke records these as Jesus' words to his followers around the year 30 of the common era. But they ring just as true later that century when this Gospel text is committed to writing. The powers-that-be weren't enthused about the growing Christian movement and accepting the Gospel could cause a person a lot of trouble and grief.**

**Does Jesus' message to those who sends in mission resonate today? I think they should. That the harvest is plentiful is good news to a church in decline. But with fewer laborers and a lot of baggage, it's daunting to figure out even where to begin.**

**The message often associated with the church these days is full of judgment, of demands that the world conform to a fundamentalist and dogmatic interpretation of Scripture, that the Word of God is a stick and not a carrot, and that as God's self-appointed Law enforcement, the church is here to judge and bring unruly sinners into line, by whatever means necessary.**

**I don't think that message is an accurate reflection of who God is and what God's Kingdom is about. But it's out there and it gets amplified day after day and we shouldn't be in denial about that.**

**But as we learn from Jesus' words to the disciples he sent out then, we can't force change in others. We can't**

**make people who identify themselves as Christians and yet say stupid, harmful stuff stop doing either of those things. But we can offer an alternative. We can't make people who will associate us with that toxic brand of religion think otherwise about us or about Jesus. But we can offer an alternative.**

**We can control no other thoughts, no other actions, no other responses than our own. We can encourage others to think differently, to act differently, to behave differently. We can live out a better example of what it means to be a Christian than pointing fingers and casting blame. We can't be perfect but we can own our mistakes and commit to efforts to learn from them and improve ourselves.**

**And we don't have to keep butting our heads into the same wall. There is a time to shake the dust off our feet and walk away. To move on to where we can be better-received. But we have to do so, as we should do all that we do, in love. We pray for those who reject us. We let the peace we offer in**

**our Lord's name come back to us when it's been unsettled and deflected. We pray for those who will try to reach them again when we cannot.**

**We don't gloat. We don't revel in how good we are when we do the right thing. Because we know we don't always do the right thing. But our joy is in our acceptance by God, the love we know and feel in God and the security of having God as our shield and protector, not that God has given us the Word as a powerful weapon. Like any weapon or tool, it is only useful for good in the hands of those with good intention and some training and discipline. Let Jesus be our teacher and give us the humility to understand we are students and disciples, never the Master in and of ourselves.**

**Amen.**