

Pastor Mollie's Sermon
July 7, 2019
Fourth Sunday after Pentecost
Luke 10:1-11

If you know me at all, you will know that when I need to get in touch with someone, I always prefer face to face interaction.

If meeting in person is not an option, and it has to be by phone, I ALWAYS ALWAYS check and see if facetime, skype, or any other form of video call is an option.

You can always get way more out of conversation when you can see the eyes of the person you are talking to!

Phone is fine if needed

And although text is most popular and quick and easy,

You don't always know what tone to read the text in.

With all that being said.....

The mission of the seventy is a tricky mission I would have a hard time accepting.

"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, 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 along 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?

At the same time, Jesus' mission should make us stop and think that maybe we are asking the wrong question.

The question is not what you need but who.

A rather obvious, yet overlooked detail in this tale of discipleship is the number seventy.

That's right -- they were not sent out alone, but two by two, and 69 others.

Each apostle had sixty-nine fellow disciples, friends in the faith, on whom to rely, to depend.

That's a lot of bodies, a lot of somebodies, on which to count if the going got rough.

And in pairs, there is always someone to be encouraging if one of the pair is discouraged,

to keep faith if one is dispirited,

and to carry on when one feels tempted to quit.

This discipleship thing can be hard, but it's always easier with a companion.

No one was going out at this alone.

Jesus is teaching his disciples already this early on in his ministry the importance of the reliance on each other, especially in his absence.

We don't do this alone.

But what are the things we put in place of people?

What are the objects we hoard so as to avoid dependence on the other?

What are those items we deem necessary for our survival, when our abundance is actually already abounding in the people around us?

I like that this is so early on in the travel narrative in Luke.

There's going to be a lot of traveling when it comes to spreading the gospel -- Jerusalem, in all Judaea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

The disciples need to know what will be necessary to carry out this mission -- and as it turns out, when they return with joy, all they need is the name of Jesus and each other.

This is a great story about the necessity of community.

We may have A small crowd today,

But then I ask you-- why are you here?

Maybe one of the main reasons you come to church is to know that this is your group of seventy.

You don't just have a few fellow apostles, but seventy, or How ever many there are here today.

I've heard a lot of folks despair over the decline of the church and then go on to describe their own feelings of helplessness.

"We're not big enough to make a difference..." or "We're not rich enough,"

or "we don't have the resources," or...well, you get the idea.

Notice, however, that Jesus sends out 70 disciples.

Not 700 or 7000, but 70.

And think of what they accomplish!

Not only in this story, but also and especially in the months and years ahead, as this is the group ...the core of the disciples who,

after Pentecost, will preach and teach the Gospel and take the good news to the ends of the earth.

God has this intriguing habit of accomplishing incredible things with the most unlikely folks, even the ordinary people we happen to serve.

What I find particularly amazing about this passage is not the miracles but the willingness to be dependent on the hospitality of others.

Think about it: no purse, no bag, no sandals and, importantly, no guarantees about how they will be received.

All they have is the promise of Jesus to go with them, to do great things through them, and to bring them home again.

The nature of faith is radically communal.

Too often, our claims about faith and spirituality are independent -- "my own faith, my own religious system, even my own God."

Or, on this Fourth of July weekend, "my own freedom" to do or say whatever we choose, to conceal and carry, to give credence to opinions because everyone is entitled.

And, too often our leadership in the church can be dangerously the same.

Leadership as communal means the constant realization of the public nature for the good of the whole.

Now, I know This theme of community is one that I have mentioned over and over again, but a message Jesus, and I can't emphasize enough.

In a world where there is less and less face to face interaction... This is a story we need to hear...

To hear how Jesus is calling us out into the world, without the distractions of our possessions,

Without the fear that we need to prepare ourselves with answers to the what if questions...

But to go out, with a buddy, say, here I am Lord, and engage in the world around us with the assurance that we are never, ever alone!