

Scripture

Psalm 66:1-9

Suzan Smith

This psalm celebrates the deeds of God for the people of God. But the celebration is not just for Israel, it assumes all peoples will join the chorus of God's praise once they recognize the actions of God for his people and for all creation. As a basis for their praise the worshipers look back to God's deliverance in the Exodus, and then recognizes God's continued help in the moment. Our reading today is the first half of the psalm.

- ¹ Make a joyful noise to God, all the earth;
- ² sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise.
- ³ Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds!
Because of your great power, your enemies cringe before you.
- ⁴ All the earth worships you; they sing praises to you,
sing praises to your name." *Selah*
- ⁵ Come and see what God has done:
he is awesome in his deeds among mortals.
- ⁶ He turned the sea into dry land; they passed through the river on foot.
There we rejoiced in him,
- ⁷ who rules by his might forever, whose eyes keep watch on the nations—
let the rebellious not exalt themselves. *Selah*
- ⁸ Bless our God, O peoples; let the sound of his praise be heard,
- ⁹ who has kept us among the living and has not let our feet slip.

Luke 10:1-11 (12), 16-20

Last week's scripture focused on the demand of discipleship. This week passage looks at its application. Specifically, Jesus sends his disciples into the world to witness and serve. Jesus gives instructions on how to act when responses are positive, and also for dealing with rejection. The passage then closes with Jesus rejoicing in the work of his disciples.

- ¹ 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. ² 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. ³ Go on your way; I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. ⁴ Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals, and greet no one on the road. ⁵ Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!' ⁶ And if a

person of peace is there, your peace will rest on that person, but if not, it will return to you. ⁷ 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. ⁸ Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; ⁹ cure the sick who are there, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ ¹⁰ But 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.”

¹⁷ The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, “Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!” ¹⁸ He said to them, “I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. ¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

Sermon

Traveling Light Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

What kind of traveler are you? Some folks travel with the entire house in the car. As a kid my mom had all the clothes we might need for the year, and the kitchen too! And as a pastor I have known young teenage girls who just had to bring their curling iron on a back-packing trip. As a hiker though, I have learned that traveling light is best. When I was in the army everyone, and I mean everyone, had to carry a 60 lb. pack on their back, whether they were 250 lbs. or 100 lbs. Traveling light – it is important.

Today Jesus sends out his disciples on a mission trip. He tells them to travel light! And Jesus seemed to go to the extreme on that idea. They were not to carry a pair of shoes, a fanny pack, or even a wallet. Wow, When Jesus said he was sending them out like lambs, he meant it. They were to go with all the vulnerability and dependence he challenged us with last week. They were to live by the gift of hospitality from others, and they were to live into the hospitality of God.

That meant that there were many things they needed to leave behind, and not just the things they carried on them, but also the things they carried in them. As faithful Jews, they would have had many scruples about who they could stay with, who they could eat with, and even what they could eat. Remember how Jesus was accused of being a friend of sinners and eating with them. It was not a compliment; it was a disgrace for

the people of Israel. So, when Jesus tells them to eat what is offered to them, and not to look for ‘better accommodations’ he was challenging our ideas of ‘the essentials’.

Jesus did not think of food, sandals or purses as necessities, but he definitely had his idea of what was essential. And his disciples had to have those things always at hand as his servants and witnesses. They were to bring with them only two things. And these two essentials were not for themselves; they were the gifts they offered to those who welcomed them, and to those who did not accept them.

The very first thing Jesus told his disciples to carry was Peace. It was the very first thing they were to extend to others. As they received hospitality, they were to invoke peace on the household. That word of peace was more than a simple greeting, it was conferring an actual reality to them, it was bestowing God’s gift of shalom on them. That shalom, that peace, represents all the well-being and wholeness of life, it holds the full range of God’s blessings, and it expresses the depth of relationship between God and God’s people. That is why a ‘person of peace’ in that household can receive it so readily. They are open and ready for the peace God sends their way.

The second thing that Jesus’ disciples are to carry with them is another word of great hope and power. “The kingdom of God has come near you.” Beyond the household, among the town that is open the messenger of Christ is to speak and embody God’s reign among them. Again, the disciples are to receive the town’s hospitality and graciousness, and they are to return that grace with grace. They are to do the works of God’s reign by healing the sick, which by the way, includes a full range of restoration. And with the evidence of God’s good works among them they are to announce ‘God’s reign is at hand’, ‘God’s presence and power are at your doorstep.’ And when a town did not welcome them? Well, they were simply to shake off the dust and move on, while still offering them the message that ‘God’s reign is coming’.

That is the good news that Jesus proclaimed throughout his life. That is the message the church has been entrusted with. It is the reality we are to live into. It is also the challenge of today’s Scripture. We are disciples of Christ, and as disciples we are also witnesses who are being sent out to a world, as Jesus said, ripe for harvest. Jesus told his messengers to ‘travel light’, so what things are weighing us down? I imagine the biggest thing is that we do not feel capable; we would deny we are ‘apostles’, and resist being ‘witnesses’. But as we see from the Scripture those who went out came back with exciting, joyful news of seeing God’s power at work, in ways greater than they could have ever imagined.

So here is an easier piece of work, and a gift for you to try this week. Take those two phrases “peace to this house”, and “the kingdom of God has come near”, and offer

them to those around you. Rework them in your own words. Let them lose their ‘churchiness.’ For example, you could say ‘I can see God’s love in you’, or ‘God is working in all this’, or ‘may you know life’s goodness’. Then try to find a way to enact those words, it could be the gift of a flower, a helping hand to someone in need, or even a smile for the grocery store clerk. Bring the action and the word together. And for this week, just this week, try it. Experiment with your family, your friends, that grocery store worker, even the person you see in the mirror every morning. Keep tabs on the results, and next week we will have some stories to tell, for sure.

Travel light, my friends, and may all God’s blessings be yours. Amen.

***Hymn**

God, Speak to Me

NCH 531

Joys and Concerns

Prayers of the People

Gracious God, thank you for the love and goodness you have shown to us. Thank you for Christ, who came to us with the promise of your peace and the power of your reign. Thank you for your Spirit, who grants us the gifts of your grace and leads us as your disciples and witnesses. We are awed that you entrust to us the good news of your kingdom, and so we come to you seeking your strength, courage, hope and wisdom as we follow your way.

We pray for your church and for this congregation. We thank you for mission you have laid on our hearts, and ask that you continue to guide us as we seek to live into your call and serve your world with provisions for body and spirit. May our work and witness gather a harvest of praise to you. We pray for our world and all its leaders. May they be true to your ways of peace and justice so that all your children may receive the fullness of life. We pray also for all who are in need today. May the ill know your healing touch, the sorrowful sense your comforting presence, and the poor gain your rich abundance. We especially lift up... and we thank you for....

We praise you, Faithful God, for the riches of heaven and earth you have entrusted to us through Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray...

The Lord’s Prayer

Choral Response

Remember Me

***Common Commission**

Let us go forth into the world in peace, being of good courage, holding fast to that which is good, rendering to no one evil for evil, strengthening the faint-hearted, supporting the weak, helping the afflicted, honoring all persons, loving and serving the Lord, and rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

*** Benediction**

Go now into the world

And may you be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to God, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God.
Colossians 1:9b-10, alt.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Amen.

Postlude “Down to the River to Pray”, Trad. arr. Mark Hayes

music provided by Chris Harris