

Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

At times when we think about those who were walking along with Jesus we think only about the 12 disciples, however there was a much larger group walking the roads with him than what we may have considered. Today's gospel indicates that Jesus sent 70 persons out ahead of him, each to different destinations, each with the responsibility to prepare the way for the kingdom of heaven to come near.

They were sent like lambs into the wolves, taking nothing with them. No money, no extra clothes, no sandals, being totally dependent upon God. What puzzles me is they were told to greet no one on the way. The only meaning I can come up with is that they were to have no distractions as they headed toward their destination.

I remember the first time I flew in a commercial airplane. We were headed to Chicago for a ministry training. Long before the flight I knew I would be flying and expressed concern to the congregation I was serving. One of the members happened to have a pilot license and the availability of a plane. He offered to take me for a flight to see what it was like to fly. So we set a time and I met him at a small airport near North East. It was a two seater so I was sitting up front with him and had a wide view of where we were in the air. I loved it. It felt like being on a boat in the water without the breeze in your hair. I'll never forget seeing Kinzua Dam and reservoir from the air.

On the day of my actual trip to Chicago we had one of the famous Erie snowstorms, and the flight out of Erie was grounded. So, the airport bussed us to Cleveland where the connecting flight would depart without a weather delay. Except, there was turbulence. My first time in a commercial plane, a small, maybe 14 or 16 passenger jet, and there was turbulence. We would be flying along, kind of choppy, then all of a sudden the plane would drop. I could liken it to riding the waves in a small boat on Lake Erie as a storm is coming up, but it was more like an amusement park ride, maybe a roller coaster. At that time I learned to put my total trust in God, if it was God's will for us to be safe, then we would be safe, and I decided to enjoy the ride. I'm just thankful it was a short trip.

When have you had to learn to totally depend on God?

The followers had to learn as they went into strange towns and found stranger's homes in which to stay for the time they spent in the village. Another thought from the passage that intrigues me is "when you enter the house say, 'Peace to this house!' And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you." What I found in my commentaries is that it is a direction from Jesus to choose where to stay. It said that if the disciple was not welcomed when the homeowner opened the door, then the disciple should look for another place to stay, a place where they were welcomed. Then they were told, do not leave that house, even if seemingly better accommodations arise, because to do so would be an insult upon the original homeowner. Jesus instructed them to accept what they received in the way of shelter and food without feeling as though they were a nuisance.

My sister is experiencing this right now. She is healing from surgery on a broken tibia and is not allowed to put any weight on her leg. Fortunately, she has a friend whose home is totally accessible for someone who is not able to get around, and she is staying there, with her friend giving her 24-hour care, at least until she is steadier getting in and out of bed and using a walker. She feels like many of us do when we can't do things for ourselves, she feels as though

she's a burden. I suggested that she reframe her thought into being a gift to the friend who is caring for her; so many times when people are hurt other people want to help, they find fulfillment in helping, and it is a gift to allow them to care. My sister isn't able to do anything right now to feel as though she is earning her keep, but the time will come when she will be able to share it forward, doing something for another person who is in need.

However, the disciples are working at spreading the good news of Jesus, that he has come as Jesus said in the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of Luke, "to bring good news to the poor. ...to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." If they are rejected as they were in Samaria, they are still to proclaim the good news, but not to stay in the town. And that is all that we are supposed to do as well. Every one of us is to spread the good news of Jesus. If it is accepted then we are to help the persons to grow in their faith, if it is not, let it be. It is not us that is being rejected, it is God.

The 70 returned joyful because they had been able to heal the sick and bring good news to the poor. Jesus rejoiced with them. Even though they had been sent out with nothing they prospered, the wolves did not devour them. The kingdom of God had come near. Those who accepted the good news were blessed. So were the persons who spread the good news.

In the end of today's passage Jesus tells the 70 that he had given them authority to tread on snakes and scorpions. This is an allegory; it is not to be taken seriously. In sociology class at Edinboro, I remember watching a video of a West Virginia church where they handled rattlesnakes. For someone like me who is terrified of snakes this left an indelible impression on me. The pastor who handled the snakes had been bitten 25 times by the time the video was produced, and he ultimately died from a snakebite. Jesus isn't telling us to go out and gather snakes to prove that we have protection, he is saying that we don't need to fear going out unequipped when we spread the good news. And we are to rejoice that we will have a place in heaven.

Yet it is not their accomplishment that the 70 are rejoicing about, it is the accomplishment of God. They had successfully completed their mission without carrying baggage. God had seen them through their journey and brought them safely home.

What is it that you are facing that you feel ill-prepared to journey through? Are you trying to carry too much baggage with you? Can it be that God is calling you to trust in his provision and step out in faith, accepting that God's grace is sufficient?

We like to be in control. We like to have things all planned out. But there are times when God's grace is the only way we will succeed, and we need to trust that God will make a way where there seems to be no way.

All glory be to God.