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July 3, 2016

“God Sends”

2 Kings 5:1-14 Luke 10:1-12 Galatians 6:1-6,7-16

INTRODUCTION TO 2 King 5:1-14

Last Sunday those of you who were here will remember the beautiful sets we had. I'm glad to report that the Indian Presbyterian Church in Livingston will be using them and after they use them they will be passing them on to another church later in the summer. Last Sunday I highlighted one of our emphases God Calms. This morning our theme is another one of our themes from last week-God Sends. Our first story of God sending someone involves God sending a young girl to make a suggestion that sends a general of a foreign army to go to a prophet of Israel. Hear the word of God from 2 Kings 5:1-13

INTRODUCTION TO LUKE 10:1-12, 17-20

On his way to Jerusalem for his last Holy Week Jesus wants to set up a several city tour. Earlier in his ministry he sent his 12 disciples into town ahead of him to prepare the way for his coming. In this morning's passage Jesus expands the scope of his mission by moving from sending the 12 disciples into one town to sending 35 teams of 2 out into 35 towns. Hear the gospel of our Lord from Luke 10:1-12.

Let's pray. Lord thank you for sending these to go and giving them specific instructions as to how to go. As we meditate on their story may we take it to heart. Open our spirits to sense your call to send us too.

I'm happy to report that the Mission Offering we took last week at our Vacation Bible School was delivered and the family that had been staying in a motel since June 5. They were very appreciative.

Mission, however, is more than an offering we take. Mission is more than a trip. Mission is more than a project. Mission is an every moment adventure. All of us are ones that God Sends. . In reality, we ALL of us are on mission. In fact, the only time we are not on mission is when we are sitting here in worship. Our goal in worship is to receive inspiration and instructions FOR our mission and to thank God and praise God for trusting us WITH a mission.”

Tomorrow we will celebrate those who put their lives on the line to establish this country as a independent nation. My great, great, great, grandfather fought with George Washington. He survived being shot in the head with a musket ball by lying in a hollowed out tree. Last night Anne and I watched a program on Benjamin Franklin. He and his compatriot's mission was to break away from being a British Colony to becoming a republic. Most of the founding fathers lost all they had to secure that independence. Some lost their lives. The war that won our freedom from England left many of our founding fathers and mothers homeless.

In our lesson from 2 Kings we saw a young slave who was on a mission. Her master Naaman had contracted leprosy. The girl told her master Naaman of a prophet in Israel named Elisha through whom God could heal him of his leprosy. Naaman went to see Elisha but when he didn't bother to come and meet him face to face Naaman started to leave in a huff. But when ANOTHER servant gave him counsel Naaman, a general used to giving orders, decides to follow orders and is healed.

In our gospel passage Jesus gives marching orders to 70 of his followers. He challenged those whom he was sending out ahead of him to go into towns as homeless wanderers at the mercy and hospitality of those to whom they came.

Jesus doesn't sugarcoat their mission. Jesus wanted his disciples to know what they were getting into. So much so, that in some ways it's a rather bleak picture that he paints for them. "The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few" (Luke 10:2).

Those that did sign up for the job needed to know that at times the working conditions will not be good. They will be fraught with danger. "See I am sending you like lambs into the midst of wolves" (Luke 10:3b)

Just in case you didn't know, wolves eat lambs for breakfast lunch and dinner. ☺ Jesus describes those he is sending as a bunch of baby sheep—lambs in the middle of wolf town!

As we go out to minister in the name of Jesus, we are to follow the example that the 70 followed.

First, we are to travel. Mission involves going FROM somewhere to SOMEWHERE ELSE to do SOMETHING and hopefully return.

Second, we are to travel light. The 70 were not to take anything that could hold them back. They weren't even to greet any one on the road" (Luke 10:4b). They did not have the time to dillydally and engage in meaningless chitchat.

Third, when they got to where they are going they were to give everyone the benefit of the doubt. Jesus said, "Whatever house you enter, first 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. Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the laborer deserves to be paid" (Luke 10:5-6).

Today people like to "keep their options open, in case something better comes along." But. Jesus says, "Don't go from house to house trying to see if you can find a better place to stay--like one with a softer bed and more delicious food. Jesus is simply encouraging them to be good house guests. Don't make your host go out of their way for you. Eat what is set before you.

But what if they are not welcomed? Jesus was just as specific in this case as he was before with those who were more accepting. The bottom line is to share God's love with them whether they will accept it or not. Say the same thing to these people. "God's kingdom is coming." Then if they won't accept you, leave that place, and find one that is more receptive.

A retired minister once put it this way, "Don't continue fishing in a pond where no one has caught a fish for years." The way Jesus put it was much more dramatically. "Wipe off the dust that clings to your feet." Shake it off. Shake it off.

Jesus is saying, "Leave the outcome to the judgment of God for their lack of receptivity. If after repeated invitations, people refuse to come to church or to return to church, move on to those who are open and receptive. The mission is too important to spend time where it is not received. If the territory is overworked, if that market is saturated, for heaven's sake, move on....for heaven's sake.

The main message of these 70 missionaries was the simple declaration "The kingdom of God is near." Dallas Willard once said that when he was a young boy, rural electrification was taking place throughout the United States. For the first time ever, tall poles popped up across the landscape of the countryside with huge electric wires strung from pole to pole to pole. But initially at least, not everyone trusted electricity and so not a few rural families opted (for a time) to not hook up. They heard the messages of the electric company of how much easier life would be with electric washing machines replacing hand-cranked wringers and electric vacuum cleaners bringing to an end the old practice of hauling heavy carpets outside to have the dirt beaten out of them. They heard these promises but did not trust or believe them.

So in a sense, Willard wrote, you could have said to those folks, "My friends, electricity is at hand!" But if they opted to not tap into that power that was running right over their heads, then the nearness of the power would do them no good."

Maybe the message of the kingdom's nearness was like that. With Jesus in the world, the kingdom of God was near, at hand. All the goodness and glory and power of that kingdom was right there, but if they kept it at arm's length, it would do them no good. Their lack of participation did not weaken the power of the kingdom. But it did land them in an unhappy (and unnecessary) spiritual situation of staying in the dark when the light of the world was right there. They were on a mission from God. (1)

Once an executive hirer, a "head-hunter" who goes out and hires corporation executives for other firms, once shared his methodology. He said, "When I get an executive that I'm trying to hire for someone else, I like to disarm him. I offer him a drink, take my coat off, then my vest, undo my tie, throw up my feet and talk about baseball, football, family, whatever, until he's all relaxed. Then, when I think I've got him relaxed, I lean over, look him square in the eye and say, "What's your purpose in life?" It's amazing how top executives fall apart at that question.

"Well, I was interviewing this fellow the other day, had him all disarmed, with my feet up on his desk, talking about football. Then I leaned up and said, 'What's your purpose in life, Bob?' And he said, without blinking an eye, 'TO GO TO HEAVEN AND TAKE AS MANY PEOPLE WITH ME AS I CAN.'

I believe every Christian has a Message, a Ministry and a Mission.
 Our Message is our testimony of what God has done and is doing in our lives.
 Our Ministry is what we do IN the church. Our Mission is what we do IN the world.

Our mission is not to go to church. That's like saying, I'm a sailor, I go visit my boat at the dock. A sailor sails. Our mission ISN'T so much to go to church or get people to come to church. Our mission is to BE the church wherever we go.

Our mission is to take God's love with us to work, to school, to Walmart, to Lee College, to Kemah Boardwalk, to Crosby and Highlands and ...even to the far away heathen land of Indiana (for our youth going to Triennium) ..Our mission is to BE the church in Wolf town. We ALL are lambs being sent out to wolf town. However, when we open ourselves to the power of all prayer, we are enabling ourselves to be available to the presence of the kingdom and the miracles and wonders Jesus brings wherever he goes.

Most any successful person will tell you that persistence in a task is a major factor in success. Success is 10% inspiration and 90% perspiration. Success is suiting up and showing up. And being those that God Sends! .

What I find particularly intriguing about the instructions Jesus gives these new missionaries, is that while he gave them a pretty tough briefing session, outlining in detail all that could possibly go wrong and how difficult it was going to be, they STILL WENT!

When they returned, they were ecstatic about what they have been able to accomplish. Jesus recognized what they had accomplished and rejoiced with them in their success. But then he quickly realizes that now there's a potential new problem and that is--how to handle success? What do you do when the results come in far better than you had anticipated? Jesus says, "Take care that you do not gloat! "Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20)

Today God Sends us. Who is your 2x2? I can think of several in this church. God sends Linda and Angie every month to take food to furry friends through their Animal Food Pantry. God sends Judy and Barbara and Lowell to give away Food every Tuesday and Thursday through our People Food Pantry. God sends people out Monday through Friday to take meals to homebound people through our Meals on Wheels. God sends Gary and Kathy forth to help keep Baytown Beautiful. God sends

us all to share God's love with those we meet. God sends our Vacation Bible School sets to bless other churches.

You know what I love about Jesus' assignment? He sent them out to do something every Presbyterian loves to do--go to someone's house and eat! He didn't tell them to gather a bunch of people in a stadium, but to go to 35 homes and eat what they serve. We can do that. Jesus told his teams to go to 35 homes and be courteous guests. We can do that. He told them to listen to folks. We can do that. He told them to share the good news- We CAN DO THAT. Because we are among the people that God Sends.

Let's pray. Dear Lord, Thank you for trusting the future of your Family to those disciples. Thank you for continuing to trust the future of your Family to us. May we follow in their steps as we seek to fulfill our Mission. Give us eyes to see others in need. Give us ears to listen to the cries of those around us. Give us lips to share the good news of Jesus with those who will listen. Give us feet to move on and continue sharing if after sharing we find no response. Give us the persistence to not give up. Give us hearts for mission. Here we are...send us...out into the world, with a story to tell.

INVITATION TO DISCIPLESHIP AND BLESSING

Your mission, should you decide to accept it, is to be the church wherever you go. Your mission is making disciples and changing lives through the transforming love of Jesus Christ! Your mission is to go to heaven and take as many with you as you can!

I pray that if you don't know Jesus this morning that you will let us fulfill our mission by making him known in your life. We would love to pray with you and lead you to make the most important eternal commitment in your life. If you do know Jesus, I pray you will join us in helping others to come to know him too. If you are looking for a place to join in that joyful task I invite you to speak to me or join me in the prayer room for prayer.

You go nowhere by accident. Wherever you go, God is sending you. Wherever you are God has put you there. God has a purpose in your being there. Christ who indwells you has something He wants to do through you wherever you are. Believe this and go in God's grace and love and power. Be blessed in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen

(1) Scott Hoezee, Comments and Observations