



“Harvest Joy”

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost
8:30 & 10:45, July 3, 2016
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Galatians 6:1-16; Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

Grace to you and peace, from God who is, who was, and who is to come. Amen.

Okay, so, in our gospel reading this morning, Jesus sends out a whole bunch of people to do some harvesting, to go on ahead of him, to go into all of the towns that he himself was intending to stop, and tell the towns about Jesus.

He gives his people travel instructions: no purse, no bag, no sandals, and don't talk with anyone along the road. He gives them social tips: don't flit from house to house, eat what's put in front of you, be polite, cure the sick. And he closes with how to deal with those who are, shall we say, less than friendly:

go out into its streets and say, '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.' (Lk. 10:10-11 NRS)

This is all well and fine for those folks who were actually *with* him, for those who got to *hear* and *touch* and *learn* directly from Jesus. But what about the rest of us? Those of us who are two thousand years removed from the guy knocking the dust off his own sandals?

It's easy to imagine those followers proclaiming Jesus' name, and healing people, curing folks, bringing sanity to an insane world. But what about us, here, now? Maybe we could be like the Rimmers, who are missionaries we support serving in Senegal, or the Troesters, who serve in Tanzania. The Rimmers foster relationships between Christians and Muslims, and the Troesters are spreading the message, working with the seminary in Tanzania, and helping with agricultural issues.

So that's *kind* of like curing the sick. Although, I am certain that many of us are probably *much better* at that whole “wipe the dust off in protest” thing. I know I am. Especially when I'm driving. But that's a message for another day.

But these followers were sent out, by Jesus, as his representatives, as his *ambassadors*. And, when we look at scripture, it appears that they had a successful harvest:

“Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!”

That's pretty cool. What a great harvest of spreading this message they had.

But the question that comes to my mind with this story is, how come I'm not able to heal people in the name of Jesus? How come I can't cast out demons, let alone even

attempting to tread on snakes and scorpions, I'm not even going to try. Why is this passage even in scripture, let alone being used for our Sunday morning text?

Well, Have I told y'all about my legs? I've talked about this at Saturday and Traditional, but don't think I've said anything here at Contemporary. As some of you are aware, last spring, I got to have the wonderful surprise of having cardiac bypass surgery. because it turns out I could be a poster for heart disease by **genetics**, not lifestyle.

So, this past February, my legs started to swell on a daily basis. I called my cardiologist, who took me off of one of my meds. Which didn't do anything to help my legs. I already had appointment with my GP. She had me try a different medicine, and sent me for some tests on my cardiac system. Those meds didn't help, either. However, the tests *Did* show that, in fact, my cardiac system is working *just fine*, including in my legs. Something else is going on. My GP ordered some blood work. Which did show that some numbers were off in my blood, specifically, the protein level in my blood is lower than what it "should" be.

My GP sent me to a nephrologist (twenty points if you know what a nephrologist is, I had to look it up). I met with him, told him my story. He looked at the results of all my tests, and basically said, '*yeah, I don't know what's going on.*' He sent me for some other tests, and next week I go somewhere to have my legs looked at (again). I'm *Hoping* when I see my cardiologist next week, he'll say, *Oh, I've seen this before, we need to do 'X'*, but to be honest, I'm really not holding out hope.

So I bore you with all my health details because in my mind, I read passages like what we had in Luke today and think,

*okay, so these people can go out hiking all around Israel, with just the clothes on their back, preaching Jesus and spreading his message, and, more to the point, **Healing People**. Why can't I be healed? Maybe I don't go around town to town proclaiming Jesus, but isn't what I do here at Trinity good enough? Why am I stuck with legs that retain fluid?*

But, I don't think that's what this passage is about.

Because, here's a thing: I'm not a believer because I think God is somehow going to **reward** me for good behavior. I'm not a believer because I think God is going to give me a nice car, or a big beautiful home, give me a great salary (within reason) so I can buy most of the toys I want need desire. I'm not a believer in order to **Stay** healthy.

There are those who DO preach that. It's called, among other things, the "Prosperity Gospel." Those who preach it tend to say something along the lines of

'If you name it and claim it, God will give it to you, so long as your faith is strong enough.'

See, that's how those preachers cover themselves – *You're not driving the car you want? Then your faith isn't strong enough. You're having marital problems? Then your faith isn't strong enough.* They put the onus on you, not themselves for preaching (and I'm going to use a polite word here, not what I want to call it) garbage. Because that's what that preaching & teaching is: **garbage**. They will quote scripture, but they take

that scripture out of context, they twist it around to say what they want it to say - which is often not anything close to what the passage is actually about. They are harvesting Very Selectively.

If you look at scripture, if you actually read ALL of scripture, and not simply a passage here or there, you will see that **faith** is a **Gift** from God. Faith Does *Not* come from us. We are called to *maintain* that faith. We are called to *feed* that faith, to read scripture, to talk with God regularly and frequently, to gather together with other believers.

Let me say this: if my legs stop swelling today, I will rejoice. If my doctors can determine in the next couple of weeks or months what is causing this imbalance in my blood, that would be *fantastic*. And if the rest of my life is spent having to take time out of every day to elevate my legs to drain fluid out them, God is still with me.

My faith is a gift from God, and God harvests the *Whole* field, not selectively.

Sisters and brothers, know that by the grace of Christ, your sins are forgiven. Feel the presence of the Spirit as we join together in the body and blood, the bread and the wine. Take to heart that no matter what our bodies may be like, by the grace and bounty of God, we are healed.

Rejoice in that harvest.

Amen.

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