

Pentecost 4-July 3, 2022

Baltic and East Nidaros Lutheran Parish

Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

"The Reason for Rejoicing"

Sermon by Pastor Randall J. Questad

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen

After this, the Lord appointed seventy others. Last week we heard what happened just before the sending of the 70. We heard that there were people that seemed eager to follow Jesus. One promised to follow Jesus wherever he would go. Another promised to follow Jesus, but first he had to bury his father. And the third would-be follower again promised to follow Jesus, but first, he wanted to go home and say goodbye to his family. The first twelve disciples of Jesus did not volunteer to follow Jesus, each one of them was called by Jesus. They were chosen simply by hearing his command to follow. There were no applications made available. There were no resumes submitted. No interviews conducted. No compensation and benefit packages negotiated. These twelve were called and they followed. Jesus' ministry was about to change and would soon be carried out only by his disciples and apostles as his time on earth was coming to an end. But the ministry of Jesus was about to make some major expansions with the addition of many more laborers who were headed to bring in the abundant harvest.

Would Jesus call the next disciples like he did the first twelve or would Jesus put an ad in the local paper and hang posters in the businesses in town that said **Disciples Wanted** and sit back and hope for applications to arrive and select the top 70 applicants? Since Jesus didn't have great luck with the three who seemed willing to follow because it was clear that following Jesus was not going to be their first priority, we are told **after this**, Jesus **appointed** 70 others. Yes, Jesus chose the next disciples just as he did the first by choosing or appointing them.

Jesus wastes no time in letting his new disciples know that being chosen by Jesus and sent out by him is not a glamorous position. Jesus told them that he would be sending them out like lambs in the midst of wolves. There is nothing encouraging about these words. It sounds like they will be eaten alive and never return. It doesn't sound like they will be welcomed. But what Jesus says next probably better describes what he means that they will be sent out like lambs in the midst of wolves. Other than Jesus telling them that they will be sent out just like the animals that entered Noah's ark 2 by 2, they are being sent out with little preparation or provisions. Camp counselors don't begin their summer work without at least a week of orientation and preparing them for some of the different situations and the unique personalities of campers they may experience. If Jesus is giving these new disciples an orientation it is brief and again it is not encouraging. Jesus tells the newly appointed that there is no packing list of things to bring along. No purses, no bag, no sandals. This sounds the opposite of what our campers that are heading to Flathead Bible Camp at the end of this month are to bring along. For us there is a long list of things needed especially for those who will tackle the day long hike for the overnight camping in the mountains.

Then Jesus tells them that when he sends them out, they are not to be distracted by anyone else they meet along the way. Jesus tells them not even to speak to them. Jesus has called the new disciples for a specific purpose, and they are not to be distracted by anyone or anything even if they think it would be the right thing to do by stopping and visiting someone along the way.

Jesus is not concerned about efficiency as these disciples are sent out. It would seem to make more sense to go to the chamber of commerce of the town and tell them their mission and see if they would make a stadium available and see if they would help promote an evangelism event where everyone could come to one place. At least you would think they would look for the largest church in town and see what kind of help they would be in organizing an event to gather more people at a time. Billy Graham didn't waste time with a house-to-house approach like Jesus suggested. Crusades for Jesus would appeal and reach more people than

hoping someone would be willing to serve you supper and give you a place to stay while you delivered the gospel to one household.

The message that Jesus gave to these disciples to deliver wouldn't have been much of a draw for a large crowd. When Casting Crowns comes to town in November this fall, they are going to be singing several songs for over an hour. For them to come out on stage and say, "Peace" and hope you say "And also with you" then head to the next town, I don't think they would be able to sell many tickets. But this is the gospel message that these new disciples were told to deliver. Peace. The same message that Jesus delivered to his first disciples when he appeared to them behind the locked doors. We don't know how these first disciples responded to this one-word message the first time, but we do know that Jesus didn't change his message by adding more words. He simply said the same word two more times. Then as he sent these disciples out, he told them they had the authority to forgive sins and to bind sins. The disciples must have hoped for doing more. They might have hoped they would receive some power to put an end to diseases that no one else could cure. Or maybe they hoped Jesus would give them a powerful message that would convince everyone to agree with each other so that they could live in peace. But the peace that Jesus gave them to proclaim was not to agree about earthly matters, but to have peace with each other when they didn't agree through forgiveness.

Jesus had already experienced and knew that his disciples would also experience that a message of peace is not always welcomed or received. There is no plan B when people do not receive the peace of God like when you are being sold something by a telemarketer who knows what to say next if your answer to what he wants to sell you is no. Telemarketers don't give up easily and don't like to take no for an answer and have a manuscript to follow of what to say next every time you decline their offer. The disciples were told that if God's peace was not received and returned to them, they were simply to move on. This does not mean that God's peace would never come to that house, but the hope that one day God's peace, God's forgiveness, the gospel of Jesus, would be willing to be heard.

These disciples were given one message. There was no orientation. They had no base salary that they would get paid even if they failed. They were told to eat what was put before them. They never delivered their message in front of large audiences. They took nothing with them except this message of peace. They were sent with little to be excited about.

However, when they returned, they were rejoicing. This one-word message changed the lives of each household where this message was welcomed. They did not return with a 100% success rate, but wherever God's peace was listened to, it worked just as Jesus said it would. The disciples were so excited at what happened that they took credit whenever demons would do as they told them. I can imagine Jesus who is able to see all things watching his disciples like in a ZOOM meeting computer screen with 70 guests and whenever God's peace prevailed, Jesus could see Satan fall from heaven over and over again. Jesus also could see his disciples becoming enthusiastic about what they thought they were doing and couldn't wait to get back and tell Jesus what they had done.

Of all the things these disciples didn't have as they were sent out, the one thing these disciples had when they returned, their rejoicing, was not taken from them, but it was redirected. Jesus told them not to rejoice at the removal of a demon, but to rejoice that since Satan had been removed, their names had been written in heaven. Jesus has called each one of us to a great mission in our homes, churches, community, and world. We are to spread God's peace wherever people are willing to listen to this good news of forgiveness and share it with someone else. Jesus told his disciples the great joy there is in delivering the gospel. You have heard it today and it is yours to share. Peace be with you. Amen