

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Let us Pray:

Holy God, this is the time when we quiet our hearts and our minds, to pay attention, to really pay attention—to what the Holy Scripture says today. May these words become the word of God in our lives this day. Amen.

Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

10:1 After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go.

10:2 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.

10:3 Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves.

10:4 Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road.

10:5 Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!'

10:6 And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you.

10:7 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.

10:8 Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you;

10:9 cure the sick who are there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'

10:10 But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say,

10:11 '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.'

10:16 "Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me."

10:17 The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!"

10:18 He said to them, "I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning.

10:19 See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you.

10:20 Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

SERMON

July 3, 2022

Let us pray.

O God of Love, O God of Truth;

Let us say strong things gently

and gentle things strongly.

Let us speak the truth in love to all

and love the truth that lives in each.

Let us hear the truth as we each need it and live that truth.

O God, we heed it through Jesus, Our brother and our Lord. Amen.

Raise your hand if you have ever volunteered for an organization.

I'd bet most of you at one time or another have volunteered
for a cause you believed in.

Maybe you helped collect canned goods for the Food Cupboard, shopped for
Community Sharing,

walked and or ran in the Race for the Cure;

or baked goodies for the Food Sale

right here at the Dorset Church.

We all have different causes we believe in

and motivations for volunteering.

But I have trouble grasping the motivation

for some people's volunteer choices.

The research I did for this sermon led me to a website called *ODDEE*, where I read an article written by Grace Murano entitled "10 Craziest Volunteer Projects." I think you'll enjoy hearing a few...

A few years ago, NASA advertised for volunteers for a study on how space flight affects healthy bodies. They recruited fit, healthy volunteers who matched the general physical profile of their astronauts. Then they asked these volunteers to spend 15 weeks in a hospital bed so they could measure how this bed-rest position affects human fitness and functioning. Fifteen weeks. In a hospital bed. Most of us would be ready to climb the walls after two days. That sounds miserable. But studies like that are often a little weird.

A Swedish university recruited healthy young volunteers to eat four cupcakes every day for six weeks for a study on the effects of fat on the human body. The volunteers weren't supposed to change anything else about their health and fitness routines or their daily habits. Just eat four cupcakes a day for six weeks. I might be foolish enough to volunteer for this study, but I know I'd end up regretting it.

But that doesn't match what the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation in Hampden Township asked of their volunteers. They recruited a small group of

volunteers to get drunk so their officers could get training in using the Standardized Field Sobriety Test.

One of the strangest volunteer opportunities happened several years ago when an author named *Shelley Jackson* asked for volunteers to help her publish her latest short story. The story titled “**Skin**” was 2,095 words long. And, according to The Associated Press, Jackson wanted to publish it by tattooing the story, one word at a time, on the skin of volunteers. Jackson tattooed the first word of the story on her own wrist. In a very short period of time, she had more than enough volunteers from all over the world who offered their bodies for her project.

What an incredible idea!

If you want to spread a story all over the world,
then tattoo the text—one word at a time—
on the skin of willing strangers.

I know that from now on, when I see a single word on someone’s arm, the thought in my mind will be—is that a word from the story, “SKIN”?

When I stop and think about how a small group of volunteers
spread the message and the mission of Jesus Christ
from Jerusalem to the whole world,
while facing down persecution and poverty,
beatings and imprisonment
and cultural differences and language differences,
I am amazed.

How was it possible?
And where did it all begin?
That’s what our scripture lesson is about this morning.

Our lesson begins with these words,
“After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others
and sent them two by two ahead of him
to every town and place where he was about to go. He told them,
‘The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.
Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore,
to send out workers into his harvest field.’”

Notice what is happening here.
Jesus has set his face resolutely for Jerusalem.
Only he knows that he is heading toward.
Only he knows that this will be
the end of his earthly mission.
It’s time to pass the torch to his followers,
his disciples,
so that they could carry his message

and continue his mission.

So he appointed seventy-two of them
and sent them ahead of him to every town
and place where he was about to go.

“He told them,
‘The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.
Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore,
to send out workers into his harvest field.’”

It reminds me of an old story about an Army sergeant who came into the barracks one morning and asked if anyone in his squad knew shorthand.

The men in his squad thought that sounded great.
Finally, a task involving no physical labor
—just sitting and writing shorthand
—and so all of them raised their hands.

“Good,” said the sergeant, “They’re **SHORTHANDED** in the mess hall!”

In this passage Jesus is saying,
“We’re shorthanded for this mission.
You don’t get it yet,
but I’m sending you out to the ends of the earth. So ask the
Lord of the harvest
to send out more workers to help you.”

The disciples don’t realize it
but this is a critical moment in their journey with Jesus.

This is the moment when Jesus’ disciples
officially become his apostles.
This is important.

In verse 1 where it says Jesus sent them out two by two,
the verb used there (sent) is *apostello*...
He literally “apostled” them into the world.

Think about the difference between a disciple and an apostle.

A disciple is simply a student
or a devoted follower of a teacher.
I believe that we can all call ourselves disciples.

Apostle, on the other hand,
means “sent out” or “a person sent.”

There is a significant difference.

You need wisdom and humility to be a disciple.
But you don't need power.
You can be a disciple your whole life.
But you're not an apostle until you go out
and share the message and ministry of Jesus with others.
That's when you need power.
That's when you need the authority
and anointing of the spirit of Jesus Christ.
That's when you need the power to see
and to love others with the same passionate,
sacrificial love God has for them.
That's when you need the power to announce the kingdom of God
to a disbelieving or hostile culture.
That's when you need the power
to heal the sick and cast out demons.
That's when you need the power to stand up for truth and light
in a world that embraces darkness and lies.
If you sit in church each week
and doubt the power of the Holy Spirit,
if you sit in church each week
and don't feel like you are being prepared for acts of mercy
and that justice and truth
are greater than you can accomplish in your own strength, if your worship
and study
isn't leading you to walk out of this church
and look for someone who needs the Good News
of the Kingdom of God,
then you are still a disciple,
not an apostle.
I am going to tell you differently and I believe
– all of us have the power, authority, the vision
and the Presence of the Spirit of the Living Christ inside of us.

So let's get ready to step into our calling as apostles,
there are three primary steps
to the process that we can find in today's lesson.

The first calling of the apostle is to pray.

In our lesson for today,
we read,
"Ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into the field..."
There are different Greek words used for "prayer"
in the New Testament.
Each one has a slightly different meaning

and portrays a different approach in our relationship to God.

The word used here for “**Ask the Lord of the harvest . . .**”
is the Greek word **deomai**.

It is used in the New Testament to refer
to **the act of begging or pleading**.

In Luke 5: a man covered in leprosy falls on his face in front of Jesus and **begs**, “Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.”

In Luke 8, a demon-possessed man **begs** Jesus not to torment him. After Jesus heals him, he **begs** Jesus to be allowed to follow him.

In Luke 9, a father **begs** Jesus to heal his sick son.

In each these passages, the word used was **deomai**.

If you have ever prayed from a heart of desperation or brokenness, then you
understand the concept of deomai.

And that’s the kind of heart Jesus
wants us to have when we pray for those
who need to hear the message of Jesus.

Jesus is saying, “Beg for them, plead for them,
let your heart break for them.”

Love them enough to pray for them
as desperately as a parent prays for their sick child. Because that
kind of love and prayer will then motivate you to go.

The **second** calling of the apostle is the calling to go,
offer peace and heal the sick.

In verse five of this lesson we read,
“When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house . . .’”
Have you ever thought about how critical peace
was to Christ’s ministry?

There is a great story of a medieval knight who returned to his castle one evening
looking like a bloody mess. His armor was dented. His face was scarred. His horse was
limping.

The lord of the castle asked,
“What hath befallen you, Sir Knight?”

The knight said,
“Oh, Sire, I have been laboring in your service,
robbing and burning and pillaging

your enemies to the west.”

“What?!?” cried the nobleman.

“But I don’t have any enemies to the west!”

“Oh.” The knight paused.

Finally, he said, “Well, you do now.”

Jesus was very specific in telling his apostles
to go in his spirit, a spirit of peace.

Christians have not always come in a spirit of peace.

And now, more than ever, when our country is so divided, we need to
find a way, for each of us, to greet another in the spirit of peace.

To listen to those who think differently, to try to find common ground
and mean it when we offer

each other the spirit of peace

we also read, “Heal the sick who are there and tell them,

‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’”

Healing and proclaiming the Kingdom of God

were also at the heart of Christ’s ministry.

In his three years of ministry recorded in the Gospels
this is what Jesus’ daily schedule looked like.

He went out,

he offered peace to all who would receive him,
and he healed the sick.

Read through the New Testament
and compare how many times

Jesus preached in the synagogues versus how many times Jesus taught,
preached, and healed people
in the marketplaces and in the fields and in their homes.

We cannot fulfill the calling of God in the comfort of the church.

That’s not what Jesus meant for us to do.

I’m not saying that to start a stampede toward the doors. Not yet.

Wait until the closing hymn.

Inside these doors, we grow as disciples.

Outside these doors, we go as apostles.

We’ve got work to do.

But that work must be done in the spirit of Jesus.

So, our first calling as apostles is to pray.

Our next calling is to go, offer peace and heal the sick.

And our **third** final and most important calling as apostles

is to announce the coming of the kingdom of God.
It will be the kingdom of justice and the fullness of peace.

As apostles, part of our deomai prayer
should be to ask God to show us
how we can contribute to the causes of peace,
justice, mercy and righteousness in our community
and in our world.

Mark Albion, wrote in , *"Making A Life, Making A Living."*

In it he reminds us of the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as he contemplated his death just two months before his assassination.

He said,

"Every now and then I think about my own death,
and I think about my own funeral.

And if you get somebody to deliver the eulogy,
tell them not to talk too long.

Tell them not to mention that I have a Nobel Peace Prize. . . I'd like for
somebody to say that day

that Martin Luther King, Jr. tried to give his life serving others.

I'd like for somebody to say that Martin Luther King, Jr.

tried to love somebody . . .

say that I was a drum major for justice . . .

for peace . . .

for righteousness.

I just want to leave a committed life behind."

Jesus told his apostles,

"The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.

Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore,

to send out workers into his harvest field."

You are here today in these church walls

because someone prayed this prayer

and someone responded to this prayer.

You are here today because seventy-two believers

prayed and went and offered peace and healing

and announced the coming of the kingdom of God,

and their message and their ministry,

empowered by the Spirit and authority of Jesus Christ,

spread to every continent on earth.

But the work isn't done.

Jesus calls you and all of us to be his apostles.

It's time for us to be the workers

I hope that when you walk out of these church doors,
you will take your part in the greatest mission
and message in the history of the world,

Peace to this House

And to all who share our global village.

May the Peace and love of God
be with you all. Amen.