

Luke 10:1-11, 16-20 ~ Galatians 6:7-16  
*I Am Sending You Out*  
 July 14, 2019 ~ 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
 The Rev. Dr. Laurie Brubaker Davis

***Introduction to Gospel Text:***

When was the last time you packed for a trip? Did you pack too much or too little? I don't know about you, but my first instinct is to pack too much. I was taught, being a camper, a Girl Scout, and raised as a Brubaker, just how important it was to "Be Prepared." Isn't that the Boy Scout *and* the Girl Scout motto? In the Gospel According to Google, it states that for a Boy Scout to "Be Prepared" means "you are always in a state of readiness in mind and body to do your duty" The state of readiness for duty that Jesus had in mind for his seventy raw recruits called for a different kind of packing list. Jesus' list was more about what *not* to pack. We'll get to that.

Deciding what not to pack, goes against our grain. The only time I didn't carry too much was when I packed for three months to go to Liberia, West Africa as a volunteer for Operation Crossroads Africa. We were told to put everything in our backpack, walk around the block carrying our backpack, and then adjust our load. That worked! Once around our suburban block in Wichita, Kansas and I took out half of what I had crammed in there—and never missed it.

Packing for a trip is one thing. Packing for life, is another. And I'm not talking about how many pairs of socks or slacks to bring. In Luke's gospel, listen for how Jesus connects our physical baggage (sandals, purse) to our state of spiritual readiness. But the clock is ticking and the sun is setting. We don't have much time. In the context of this lesson, our third Sunday in what I am calling the "boot camp for disciples" section of Luke, the cross looms on the horizon for Jesus, who has already "set his face to go to Jerusalem." At this point, he is ready to send his troops onto the field.

Jesus employs the metaphor of the harvest to help them sense the urgency roiling in his gut. Everyone in Jesus' world knew that harvest time is a make or break season. A farmer will hire on everyone he can find to bring in the harvest, otherwise the crop will be wasted and fall to the ground, worthless. Why else would Jesus suddenly multiply his workforce by recruiting 70 additional disciples? Matthew, Mark and Luke all include a similar story about Jesus sending his disciples out. But only in Luke, does Jesus commission the additional 70.

As I read this passage now--continuing the work our children did to get you paired up and ready to go— imagine yourself as one of the seventy. You sense the power in this man, like no one you've ever known. Perhaps, you've felt his healing touch. And you know your life will never be the same. You're normally cautious, planful—but still something inside of you tells you says, "Go!" But you wonder, why is he? I'm not a Rabbi. I'm not even one of his 12 disciples. How does he know that I have what it takes? Better listen up: This un-packing list, these talking points are all we're going to get before we hit the road.

***Sermon:***

"Have you taken all the change out of your pockets and your belt off? Now come forward, Stand with your feet on those yellow footprints. Raise your arms as indicated by the picture. OK, you come out now and retrieve your luggage." That's what happens at the airport security line...if you're lucky. Otherwise you may be subjected to further inspection before you put your shoes back on, recombobulate your stuff and scurry to your gate to board your plane.

What are they searching for? As we know, the grim reality since the attacks on September 11, 2001, necessitated extreme airport screening for anything that might be used as a weapon to do devastating harm to all who would board an airplane. In our gospel story today, as Jesus appointed and commissioned seventy others to go ahead of him, he faced an opposite challenge. These 70 already had inside of them the greatest weapon to do the greatest good for the good of all. The one weapon more powerful than hate or fear: A gift from God, planted in their soul, waiting to be discovered, to be shared, to be set free: the power of Divine Love.

God knows our broken world needs this power, this greatest weapon to be opened up. This one that we keep concealed or don't even know we have. In Jesus' boot camp for disciples he sends his recruits out two-by-two in order to discover and discharge this power deep inside of them. The way this power gets discharged is like no other weapon on earth. We find it in community with others, and we develop it, deepen it, hone it--by risking. By being unguarded and vulnerable. When he tells them to "carry no purse, no bag, no sandals" he is telling them to trust, to risk, to open themselves to let God take the lead. To be transparent. And to get ready to be non-reactive. Scary? Yes. Life-giving: absolutely. World-redeeming? That's the plan Jesus is letting us in on right here.

The secret code in the number 70 that Jesus sends out points all the way back to Genesis 10, where the sons and nations of Noah add up to 70 nations. It is a number to symbolize everyone on earth. Layer on top of that our understanding of the number 7 as the number of completeness – the seven days of creation, the seven days in our week. You get the picture. The point in our context, is that Jesus' message of peace and God's justice is for all the earth. But as long as we keep it hidden, as long as we let our fear and our wounds drive us, nothing will change. There will be no new creation. Divisions will continue to diminish us. Are you tired of the hate and fear that divides and threatens to destroy us? The number 70 in our story pushes us forward and outward. Whether we like it or not. Whether we think we are ready or not. Our hesitation is killing us.

As Jonathon Wilson-Hartgrove, author and activist has written, "Yes, our greatest weapon is love. But when we love in public, it looks like a disruption. That's probably why we hesitate. We'd rather go along than disrupt. But that is the luxury of looking at our lives from a position of privilege and security. When we love our neighbors as ourselves—when we actually "go and do likewise" in public--it disrupts. But it also disarms the power of the enemy. And as Jesus told the jubilant and surprised returning 70: Satan will fall. Jesus saw him fall like a flash of lightening from the sky. Tackling the enemy is no joke. Jesus knew it would mean the cross for him. But that was the cost of opening up the new creation for us. Jesus sends us out by the power of the cross and his resurrection.

How is that working for us now, in 2019? You don't need me to point out how great we are at concealing this superpower of love. Or how easily we forget we have it. Or how quick we are to trust the voices that seem louder and more powerful in our lives. Jesus help us here, as he did the 70. He told them to shake the dust off their feet, the dust of rejection, the dust of sin that diminishes and divides and say, "The Kingdom of God has come near." But instead we collect the dust, we hold onto it and carry it with us. I think the spoken-word artist, Anis Mojgani – in his poem, "Shake the Dust" captures the spirit of Jesus' and his teaching to those being sent. He speaks poetically of what we need to unpack in order to access the kingdom of God within, and share the Peace of Christ to all. Let the the part of this poem that a read to you now, open and ready your heart to be sent:

“<sup>ii</sup>This is for the fat girls  
 This is for the little brothers  
 For the former prom queens  
 And for the milk crate ball players  
 This is for the schoolyard wimps  
 And the childhood bullies that tormented them,  
 Shake the dust.  
 This is for the benches and the people sitting upon them.  
 This is for the bus driving a million broken hymns  
 And for the men who have to hold down three jobs simply to hold their children.  
 For the nighttime scholars  
 And for the midnight bike riders trying to fly,  
 Shake the dust.  
 For the two-year olds who cannot be understood because they speak  
 Half English and half god,  
 Shake the dust.  
 For the girl whose brother is going crazy  
 For the gym class wallflower  
 And for the 12-year olds that are afraid of public showers  
 For the kid who’s always late to class because he forgets the combination to his  
 locker  
 For the girl who loves somebody else,  
 Shake the dust.

This is the for the hard men  
 who want love but know that it won’t come  
 For the ones who are forgotten  
 For the ones whose amendments do not stand up for  
 For the ones who are told to speak only when you are spoken to  
 And then are never spoken to  
 Speak every time you stand  
 So that you do not forget yourself...

This is. This is for you...  
 So grab this world by its clothespins  
 And shake it out again, and again  
 And jump on top and take it for a spin  
 And when you hop off, shake it again...  
 So when the world knocks at your front door  
 Clutch the knob tightly and open on up  
 Run forward into its widespread, greeting arms  
 Your fingertips trembling  
 Though they may be.”<sup>iii</sup>

So, I say to you now: Grab a partner, don’t go it alone. Run forward, carrying only LOVE, “our greatest weapon” Don’t hide it –use it: be quick on the draw. I hear Jesus saying to us this day, “I have prepared you. I went to the cross and I was raised for you. You are ready for duty: I am sending you. Go.”

---

<sup>i</sup> Jonathon Wilson-Hartgrove, *Reconstructing the Gospel: Finding Freedom from Slaveholder Religion*, (Intervarsity Press Books: Downers Grove IL, 2018) 103.

<sup>iii</sup> Anis Mojgani, “Shake the Dust,” for the full poem see <http://bierkegaard.blogspot.com/2010/06/shake-dust-anis-mojgani.html> or better yet, watch the YouTube of the poet performing this work.