

Rev Ken Wratten

July 7, 2019 – 4 Pentecost ← delivered

At St. Luke's Church

Isaiah 66:10-16

Third Isaiah-the restoration of Jerusalem after the exile in Babylon. God will give motherly comfort to this 'new creation'.

Psalms 66:1-8

God holds our souls in life, and will not allow our feet to slip.

Galatians 6:14-18

May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Luke 10:1-12, 16-20

Jesus sends out the seventy. Whoever listens to you listens to me... whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me.

A core purpose in our life as Christians is Discipleship; building up our faith by learning more about God's Word, more about taking on the character of Christ, and how to apply biblical principles in a realistic way to the way we live our lives.

The Gospel lesson today is about Jesus conducting field training of a large group of disciples. There had been enough small group discussion, and enough bible lessons. Jesus had been teaching for three years; and Jesus had now set his mind and his course of travel on Jerusalem for that final chapter of his ministry on earth. In that setting, he chose 70 disciples to take the next step in their development. He calls each of us to grow in our discipleship, too. And so by studying this story we can learn more about what it means to be a disciple, why it matters, how to do it.

Being a Disciple = student of Christ. But this is a whole lot more than studying for a test on the sayings of Jesus. This is about learning how Jesus thinks, about his values and personality; and also to take them on to be our own.

Ephesians 4:21-24; "Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life... Put on your new nature, created to be like God..."

Let's look at this passage, and the 10 things Christ says to the 70:

1. "The harvest is plentiful" = the world really needs to hear the message that Jesus was sent to deliver. The world really needs the faith we can tell them about. So it's important to learn to do it in an effective way.
2. "Ask the Lord of the harvest" = Your chances to share your faith effectively need to be based in prayer. Some days I feel so frazzled with my schedule that I forget about prayer. But when I do pray, some of the junk I was trying to balance just goes away, and some is clearly not so important, and some is made clear that I make sure it gets done. 'Ask the Lord of the harvest for help'.
3. "Go on your way" = Christianity is not a spectator sport. It isn't a philosophy, or an intellectual exercise. Christianity is direction from God about how to live a purposeful, useful, fulfilling life. It's about getting out and getting to work.
4. "I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves" = One meaning of this is that there are risks in being witnesses for Jesus. But another meaning is that as we learn to live into the character of Jesus, we become the lamb who brings a divine peace into situations that are filled with wolves. We become the non-anxious presence.

5. “Greet no one on the road” = don’t be side tracked by the busy-ness of the day, or the distractions of what the world thinks is important. How often does your conversation gravitate to your relationships at St Luke’s, and the goals and visions we are working on here? How often do you talk to God during the day? To keep focus on your faith life, find a place and time that works for you.
6. “The Kingdom of God has come near to you” Lots of people are too busy to notice God. The 70 disciples were sent to share stories of what they had seen, and what they were being taught, and how that made them feel. When we share how our faith life has changed us, and what it brings into our lives, that is bringing the Kingdom of God to the people around us. They are getting a glimpse of the God they have wanted to feel close to, but didn’t know how.
7. “Eat what is set before you” = We meet people where they are. We honor their culture and customs, and simply share who Christ is for us. Cursillo says it in a great way: be a friend, make them a friend, and THEN bring that friend to Christ.
8. “When they do not welcome you...” = Jesus knows we won’t always succeed. We are only expected to tell our version of the story. Maybe the person we are talking to about our faith needs to hear it from somebody else, or at a different time in their lives.
9. “Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you.” = Not everybody will listen, or seem to care; but that should not stop us from being true to the faith we have. Don’t let the questions of others stop you from saying grace in a restaurant, or showing a cross of ashes on your forehead on Ash Wednesday, or reading your Bible in Starbucks, or telling somebody you are praying for them.
10. Again, “Know this, the Kingdom of God has come near” = Through this experience of the disciples, God became closer to the people than before. That shouldn’t result in the disciples feeling highly of themselves, because this is God working through them. Instead, the disciples, you and I, should feel fulfilled that through us, others find a connection with God that they have never been able to find.

One of our purposes in life is to keep growing in our discipleship: to keep learning the mind of God by studying Jesus; to keep stepping out to take on his values and character in what we do. These ten instructions from today’s Gospel challenge us to take our faith out of the pages of Scripture, out of this worship space, and into our lives.

Pray for the Lord of the harvest to make each of us effective disciples. Amen.