



SAINT LUKE'S

PROPER 9C

2 KINGS 5:1-14

PSALM 30

GALATIANS 6:1-16

LUKE 10:1-11, 16-20

A SERMON BY THE REV. WILLIAM OGBURN

JULY 7, 2019

In the Name of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Today we hear from the middle of Luke's Gospel about Jesus sending out seventy people as missionaries. He sends them out in pairs to scope out how his message of peace and how news of the Kingdom of God will be received in all the surrounding villages. He tells them to take nothing with them. He tells them to rely on the hospitality of others. Jesus wants them to share the good news. The seventy return to Jesus and tell them how they were able to cure the sick and how they were able to overcome demonic forces. Jesus then tells them that all of their power and authority comes through him and is not of their own doing - and that they should take delight, not that they have power, but rather that they *belong* to God who is the source of that power.

Just like the seventy Jesus sent out, we as the baptized all have a ministry mission. We all participate in the rhythms of the Church year and in the life of the Church, which is in Christ himself. We all have something to offer of ourselves for Christ's service. And we all want to give God our very best. And sometimes, like the seventy who went out, we are amazed by what God does in and through us. The danger, of course, is starting to believe that we are the source of amazement. This is why we have to keep

Jesus at the center of all we do. He is the one who reconciles and heals us. He makes us whole and reminds us that our joy is in belonging to God – and not in what we can accomplish seemingly on our own.

Sowing good seeds and working for the good of all, the common good, is what we are called to do as faithful witnesses of Jesus – and this is something that we need to think about when sowing, not only when reaping! That’s hard, because it often means not putting ourselves first, which is what the world tells us we should do. It also means thinking in new kinds of ways. It means sharing Christ’s peace. Sharing his love and his peace is part of being a new creation. And being “a new creation is everything,” as Paul reminds us. Being a new creation means that we are not defined by the worst of our sins, but by what we have been transformed into through the mercy and glory of God. Then, all of the stuff that gets in our way just disappears. We stop navel-gazing and start looking out for each other and focus our attention on God. It is then that we will become more careful sowers and more fruitful reapers.

I don’t know about you, but I always get a little nervous when Paul goes on about “the flesh.” Many have come to interpret this to mean bodily and sensory pleasures. However, to better understand

what Paul is actually intending, it is helpful to substitute the word 'flesh' with the word 'ego' ~ a word Paul would not have known. See what you hear differently: "If you sow to your own ego, you will reap corruption from your ego; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit." That is what Paul is really after here: our egos, our complacency, our need to be in control, and our need to be right. When those things have been let go, then, as Paul says, "we can boast in [nothing but] the cross of Christ."

When we submit ourselves to God, and let go of our complacency and our ego, and our need to be in control, we can be healed and we can then be children of peace. What I think is remarkable about the seventy is that they return to Jesus. They don't go off and exploit the power and authority they have been given. Granted, some are a bit too impressed with themselves, but they return – and Jesus reminds them that their power and authority is from him and from God. They are not the source, and Jesus tells them to delight in belonging to God.

Each week, we are sent from this place just like Jesus sent the seventy. We are sent "forth in the name of Christ." We are to "go in peace to love and serve the Lord." And like the seventy, we go out thankfully. We go home, we go to school, we go to work, we go

to play, we go to pray, and we go to share the good news with a world longing to hear about the goodness and love of God. And like the seventy, we return each week to this place. We return to remember that God is the source of all goodness, all mercy, all love, and all peace. As God's children, we come to the altar to be nourished with Jesus' body and blood as food for the journey that we may share God's goodness, God's mercy, God's love, and God's peace with the world. May we always remember that we are infinitely loved by God and may we always find our home and our delight in knowing to whom we belong.

In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

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