



July 9, 2017

We Go Out With a Purpose
Luke 10:1-11; 17-20 NRSV
Pastor Jason Bryan-Wegner

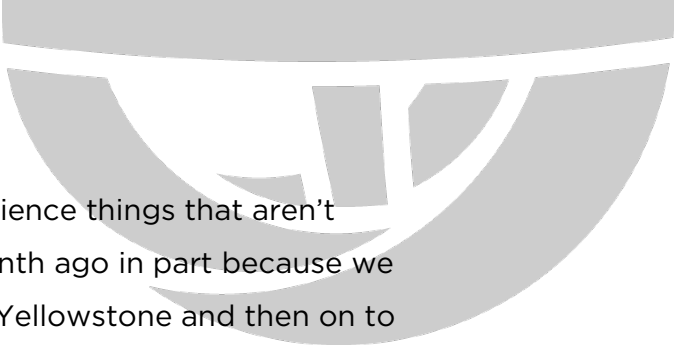
LUKE 10:1-11; 17-20

NRSV

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. ²He 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. ³Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. ⁴Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. ⁵Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!' ⁶And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. ⁷Remain 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. ⁸Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; ⁹cure the sick who are there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' ¹⁰But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, 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.'

¹⁷The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!" ¹⁸He said to them, "I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. ¹⁹See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you. ²⁰Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

I love summer. The long daylight hours give energy for all kinds of things that would seem impossible in January. And it's the season of the road trip: a time to



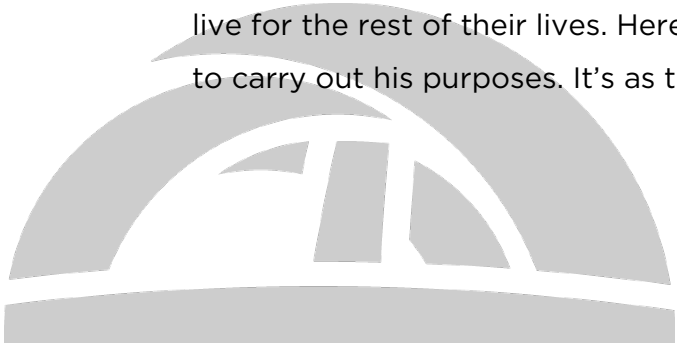
take in the countryside, meet new people, and experience things that aren't common at home. We bought a new-to-us van a month ago in part because we are planning a cross-country trip in August through Yellowstone and then on to meet the group going to Holden in August.


We're in the time of the summer here at Zumbro that our middle schoolers and high schoolers have been packing up and heading out on mission trips too. We have 33 high schoolers and adults in Jamaica right now serving at churches and orphanages. And right after worship today, I'm leaving with 14 middle schoolers and adults on a trip to an Indian Reservation in South Dakota. You can follow us on these adventures on Zumbro's blog. You'll find it on the front page of our website or our Facebook page.

Before setting out on any trip, you need a good packing list. A packing list for any trip is one of the things that help us figure out the trip's purpose. If you're packing your tent, a rain jacket, and plenty of bug spray you're probably planning on camping. If sunscreen, a hat, and a swimsuit are on the list, it's likely you're planning on spending some time by the water.

When I was packing for the mission trip this week, the packing list had things on it like pants that can get paint, sweat and mud on them, close toed shoes, a water bottle, sunscreen, sleeping pad, and a pillow. It's clear from just these few items that we are not going to the spa for a week. We're going to work, and serve, and get hot and dirty in the process.

In Luke's gospel, Jesus appoints seventy people and sends them out on a mission of their own. They are going to practice the way of life Jesus is calling them to live. Reach out to strangers, cure the sick, and announce that no matter how people think or respond, God's peace and salvation is near. They have been changed by their encounter with Jesus and that change will impact the way they live for the rest of their lives. Here, Jesus call extends beyond the twelve disciples to carry out his purposes. It's as though he's saying, "This kind of life is not



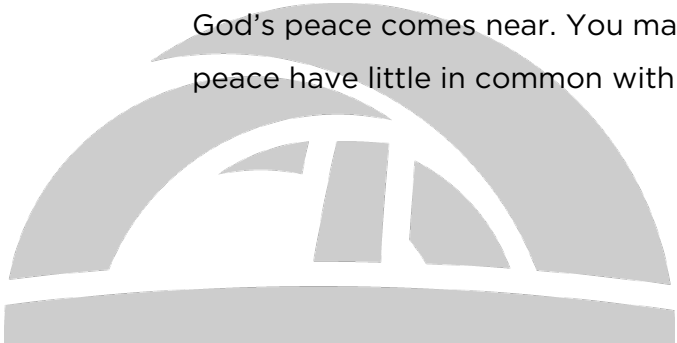


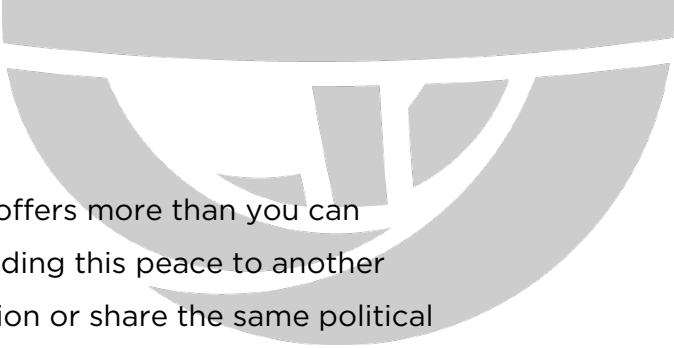
reserved for a special group of people. This is what it means to follow me. You all have what it takes to do what I do.”

Unlike the packing list for our mission trips today, Jesus’ packing list for these seventy servants has more on it about what NOT to bring than what to bring. “Don’t carry a bag or purse or extra pair of sandals”, Jesus says. “Travel lightly, live lightly, because you don’t need a lot of stuff to do what I do. In fact, the less stuff you have the easier it will be for you to do what you’re meant to do.” Maybe it’s because carrying too much along the way would slow down their mission, or maybe it’s because some of those seventy didn’t have an extra pair of sandals in the first place, and some others had too much, or maybe by having to attend to what they have, they wouldn’t be able to see what others needed. By instructing them to travel lightly, Jesus levels the field for these 35 pairs so that they can stay focused on the purpose before them.

It’s not easy to travel through life lightly though. Over packing, whether it is for a road trip or for life happens pretty easily. We have a tendency to over pack material goods, and schedules, and lists of things we feel we have to accomplish. The way we measure our stuff, our status, and our time often pulls us apart, rather than brings us together. But that’s what Jesus sets us out to do, bring people together, share life and peace with others. Jesus never counts how much stuff we have or how much we have accomplished. Instead, when he sends us out, he tells us to make sure we have someone to share the journey with and to bring as much faith and courage as possible into each day. It’s not always easy following in the way of Jesus. Remember, he sent the seventy out like lambs into the midst of wolves. People aren’t always interested in what Jesus offers. It’s easier and more convenient to make life about our stuff, than what God might be calling us to do with our lives.

Here’s the thing though, you may be surprised by the people and places where God’s peace comes near. You may discover that the people with whom you share peace have little in common with you or that those you think focus most on what

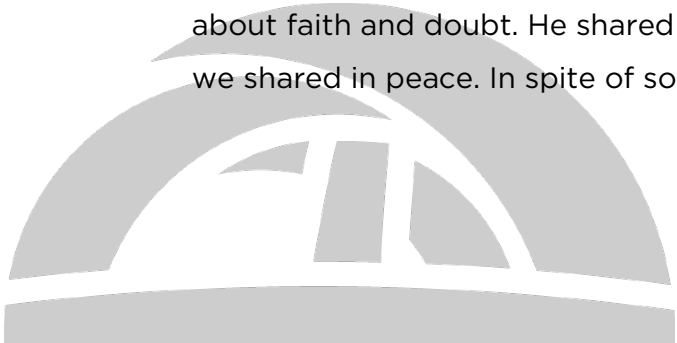


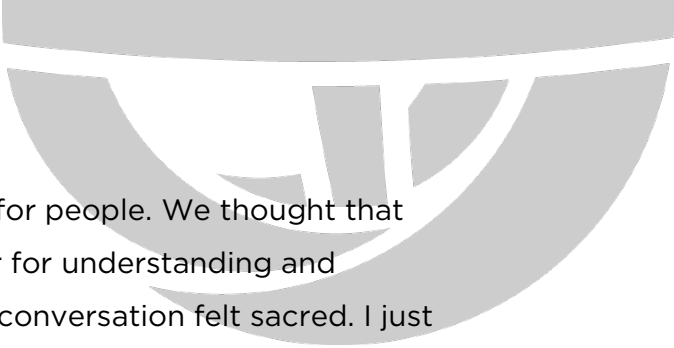


they have actually are seeking the peace that Jesus offers more than you can imagine. But you'll never find out until you risk extending this peace to another person. They don't have to be the same race or religion or share the same political persuasion. You don't have to convince them to think or do anything differently than they think right now. Jesus just calls us to be with those who whom he wants peace to rest on. What we do is show up, God does the rest. Professor Rolf Jacobson, from Luther Seminary, once said, "The church's mission is not to be great hosts, but to be great guests. We will be judged by how well we receive other people's cultures, smells, foods, and habits. The church is the church when it is sent."

This past Tuesday, Erica and I went to Duluth to see my brother Chris's band play for the 4th of July on the lakefront. He and the band hadn't played many live shows, but they have quickly built a good reputation around Duluth. We wanted to provide a little encouragement to them and see them play live. After they played, we grabbed a beer and had a chance to go back stage and meet a bunch of people. I met John, one of my brother's longtime friends. He approached me with a big smile, a beer in one hand, and a big open hand ready to shake mine as he approached. We introduced ourselves and started talking. I had heard he recently moved to Minneapolis. I asked him how it was going and what he does there. It turns out he works for one of the new beer companies there. He said, "I get to sell beer!" as he raised his glass. I got the quick impression that he had a bit of a wild streak to him. We talked for about ten more minutes about life in the city. Then he turned to me and asked, "So, what do you do?"

I paused and smiled nervously. I was wondering how this was going to go. "Well," I said, "I'm a pastor." His eyes got big and then he got an inquisitive look on his face as he asked, "What does that even mean?" Then he started to talk about how he wasn't a believer, but he was raised Jewish. And he knows how important that is to his family. Then he plunged into some deep questions about the purpose of life, about faith and doubt. He shared what he thought too. Over the next 45 minutes we shared in peace. In spite of some very different habits and perspectives on





some things, we realized we shared a common love for people. We thought that the world is better off when we listen to one another for understanding and common ground. Something about this unexpected conversation felt sacred. I just thought I was going to Duluth for a concert, it turned out God showed up too, and something more happened.

Friends, whether we are going across the street, or to work, or on a road trip across the country, Jesus sends us out to share life and peace with others, to seek what Jesus called the Kingdom of God. So, travel light my friends, and pay attention along the way. Jesus is right; the Kingdom of God has come and is still coming near. You never know who God may place in your life that will share some peace with you and remind you that we are always sent out with a purpose. Amen.

