

You need nothing.

Luke 10:1-11, 16-20
The Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

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Christ the King, New Brighton
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Grace and peace to you from God our father and mother, and from our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen

It is so good to be back here in worship with all of you again. For the last two Sundays, I was away on a church mission trip with a group of youth and adults from Christ the King. We travelled to Knox County, KY with the Appalachian Service Project (or ASP).

We had an incredible journey together as we met with families and labored towards making their homes safer, warmer, and dryer. We were confronted by extreme poverty, and we were also gifted with such generosity and kindness along the way.

Yes, it was a fantastic mission trip. So I thought it was appropriate to open my Bible for this Sunday only to find instructive words from Jesus as he sends seventy of his followers off on a mission trip of their own. Naturally I wondered, "How did our ASP trip compare to the instructions given by Jesus?"

We will have a later opportunity in worship to say more about our trip. In fact, there were several ways in which it deeply reflected the spirit of what Jesus says in Luke 10. However, the thing that jumped out at me right away – the one part that we certainly did not obey – was the whole, "carry no purse, no bag, no sandals" part. "When you go out on mission," says Jesus, "leave behind your money, all of your possessions, and, just for good measure, your shoes!"

Now there are so many wonderful virtues that our adult leaders and youth displayed on our trip, and I could go on and on about them. But one thing we weren't so good at was "packing light." Thirty-three of us filled a large trailer with luggage, tools, various sleeping apparatuses, many pairs of shoes, and back-up items for all of the above should we need them.

Because this was a building trip, tools and hard-soled shoes were necessary. Still, I found myself wondering whether I (and whether perhaps some of my travelling companions) overdid it a little on the personal items. For some odd reason, Jesus sends the 70 on a mission with nothing but the clothes on their backs. He sends them out into the world as beggars. Why is it, then, that we schlep so many personal possessions with us on even the shortest of mission trips?

This Fourth of July weekend—a weekend where we as a nation will spend well over a billion dollars on fireworks to festively light up the night sky; a weekend where the annual Coney Island hotdog eating king will be crowned for consuming upwards of seventy hotdogs in ten minutes—this weekend is either the absolute best or the absolute worst time to reflect on our culture of

consuming stuff. But I do think that our relationship to stuff is somehow related to an understanding of freedom. And I think Jesus thinks so, too.

Freedom. The word of the weekend, is it not? Martin Luther defined the Freedom of a Christian this way: "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none and A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all" (repeat).

For Luther, freedom in Christ gives us an identity as an individual beloved and claimed by God AND this same freedom gives us an identity that is totally bound up with everyone else! We are called to live according to the particular call that God gives to each of us AND we are always called to serve others, all the time. Do you feel the tension there?

So, when Jesus sends his missionaries out, he says, "the harvest is plentiful and I promise it to you and you and you!" AND he says, "you need nothing! Take nothing! Possess nothing!" Sounds like a contradiction, doesn't it? But pay attention to what else Jesus instructs: "Whatever house you enter, say, 'Peace to this house' ..." and then, "Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide!"

When it comes to doing God's mission, Jesus commands us to go out into the world as beggars, and to accept the hospitality of others. Jesus commands us to sit around tables, and to eat whatever food is offered. To rely completely on the generosity of others. To be fed and satisfied by whatever is placed in front of us.

My friends in Christ...and my fellow citizens of these United States...this does not sound like freedom to me. And yet, those whom Jesus is sending are free! They are free in Christ. Even though they have no purse, no possessions, and no shoes, do not forget what they do have! Do not forget what we have! We have the name of Jesus who loves us and calls us and forgives us. AND, we have each other! For Luther, for Jesus, and for us...these are the two things that give us identity and freedom.

After all, if we cannot find our freedom in Christ, where are we to find it? The hard-won independence of this nation gives us countless freedoms to enjoy. It is right that we celebrate them this weekend! And yet I cannot remember a time in my own short life where we have come to fear one another more than we do right now.

Violent, deadly attacks such as the one in a gay nightclub in Orlando, and most recently the one at Istanbul's Ataturk airport, reveal the hatred and division that festers between people, both at home and abroad.

Such horror threatens to push us deeper into prisons of fear and alienation. Such terror tempts us to focus on only self-preservation. When we stop listening to voices of difference, when we, out of fear, no longer sit ourselves around the tables of strangers and enemies as Christ commands, we stop living as people who truly believe ourselves to be free.

Which brings me back to why I think I probably packed too much stuff on our mission trip (or really any trip). When the unknown lies ahead; when I feel within me the fear that threatens to swallow up the freedom I have been promised in Christ, I grasp instead for things that make me feel safe.

At their best, both our nation and church have exercised true freedom by fighting for justice for all people, by recognizing that freedom means we are all in this together. When we speak up and advocate for the least powerful among us, we announce to the world the true freedom that is ours. BUT, when we treat consumerism – buying stuff – as the mark of what makes us free, we have let fear win out.

To be free is to love. To be free is to trust. And the love that makes us truly free can only be found in God and in one another.

Jewish writer Elie Wiesel died yesterday afternoon. As a teenager, Wiesel was sent to the Auschwitz concentration camp during the Holocaust, and he somehow survived to tell about it. This man who witnessed the worst horrors of the modern age, who wrestled his whole life to understand how God could allow such suffering to happen – this man still witnessed to a God who is love until his death.

Wiesel wrote, “The opposite of love is not hate, it’s indifference.”

Jesus does not send us on a mission of indifference. Instead, Jesus sends us in freedom on a mission where we must learn to rely on one another. These seventy go ahead of Jesus to prepare a place for him; and then, just as it is now, Jesus promises to be present wherever neighbors and enemies and strangers and friends share food together in complete and total freedom. In complete and total love. Jesus does not send us on a mission of indifference, but beautiful and sacred interdependence!

Sometimes this mission will be joy-filled and we will find ourselves seated around tables of rich food. But sometimes this mission will be hard, and, in the face of terror and fear, we will need to trust even more fiercely in the freedom God has promised us in Jesus Christ. To trust, and even to rejoice, because, as Jesus says, “your names are written in heaven.”

So come to the communion table. Come in freedom. Come as God's beloved. This is the food that has been prepared for your journey. You need bring nothing more than yourself to this table. God is here to feed you. Amen.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

It's a holiday weekend, anyone know what our holiday is?

The Fourth of July!

Are you doing anything special for this holiday? Fireworks? Eating hot dogs? It is such a fun weekend and such a good way to be together with family and friends and remember the many ways that we are free.

I want to talk about something not quite as fun this morning. I want to talk a little bit about failure. Have any of you ever tried really, really, really, REALLY hard at something and still the thing didn't work out the way you wanted it to (show of hands). Sports, school...yah, it's a yucky feeling.

Jesus sends a bunch of his followers out to do a job for him. But you know what he tells them? He tells them that he knows they might not be successful at their job. It's a really hard job he gives them. And Jesus says, if things don't turn out the way you want them to, just shake the dust from your feet.

That's kind of a funny image, isn't it? Shake the dust from your feet. You have dusty feet? That's Jesus' way of saying "move on." Just shake the dust right off and start walking to the next task. Instead of cleaning our feet, today we might shrug our shoulders after we fail and say something like, "Oh well." Or "Everything is going to be okay."

Because Jesus promises to love us no matter what we do, or what happens, or whether we win or whether we lose, or whether we succeed or whether we fail. The most important thing is to remember this love, and not to let failure define you. Instead, shake the dust from your feet. Shrug your shoulders. Move on! You are loved.

Prayer.

Help me bring the offering up after passing of the peace!!

WELCOME

Welcome to Christ the King this morning over this holiday weekend. I am Pastor John and I will be leading us through our worship this morning. It is so good to have you all here this morning as we gather to offer praise to God and rejoice in the freedom we have together through Christ Jesus. I want to say a special welcome to any visitors who might be with us this morning. Please take some time after worship to stop by the welcome desk located in the narthex.

As beloved children of God, we begin our worship by first confessing our need for forgiveness before God and one another. I invite you to please stand and join me in the Confession and Forgiveness.

BLESSING OF COMMUNION KITS

Compassionate God, as Jesus called disciples to follow him, bless those who go forth to share your word and sacrament with those who are sick and homebound. May these gifts be signs of our love and prayers, that through sharing of the body and blood of Christ, all may know your grace and healing revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN

ANNOUNCEMENTS

As I mentioned, 33 CTK youth and adults returned last Sunday evening from our annual ASP trip. It was a terrific trip, and I know the group looks forward to sharing some reflections with you later this summer. There is another opportunity to build a house with members of CTK. We are volunteering w/ Habitat for Humanity on July 25-26. Need 18 volunteers for each day...build site is in Blaine. Sign up on the website!

The July issue of The Herald is out! Watch for it in your email, or you can access it on our website. A limited amount of paper copies are around the Church as well. Lots of news included there.

Pick up a What's Happening – more condensed; also, check out our website.