

## Impact Of Our Witness

Text: 2 Kings 5:1-14

Galatians 6(1-6) 7-16 (Series C. 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost) Ps. 30

Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

*After this the Lord chose another seventy-two men and sent them out two by two, to go ahead of him to every town and place where he himself was about to go. He said to them, "There is a large harvest, but few workers to gather it in. Pray to the owner of the harvest that he will send out workers to gather in his harvest. ..."*

Let us pray:

There is nothing new happening in the world. The world is and has always been a fearsome place. Wars, threats of war, battles for power, hate mongering, violence, poverty and desperation, bad governance, extreme weather, and multiple other catastrophes destroy lives daily everywhere around the globe.

We truly are but sheep among wolves in the fields of ancient and new history and humanity. But there are more of us now than ever before and we think that we "know more" given the increasing of "breaking news," misinformation, disinformation, and manipulated *Us vs Them* on social media, wearying ourselves into the anxiety of chaos and paralyzing uncertainty.

Yet Isaiah provides hope, a glimmer of our reassuring God who *comforts* us, *nurtures* us, and, as the Psalmist says, *who holds our souls in life*. All we need to do is know it, believe it, accept it, and live by it.

There are some things that happen that leave a permanent mark on our lives. We are never the same again. Some of these life-changing things have a negative impact on our lives. A young man returned from the Vietnam War moody, easily angered, often withdrawn and too often difficult to deal with. Before Vietnam he was a friendly, well-liked person but what he experienced in the war, especially his involvement in the deaths of villagers of all ages, dramatically changed him.

On the other hand there are events and people who change our lives in a positive way. There is the story about a man who visited the Fiji islands.

This visitor was sceptical of missionaries. He spoke with the chief and told him that nobody believed what the Bible had to say nowadays. He even went as far as to say nobody believed all that stuff about Jesus either. He concluded his remarks by saying "People know better now, and I am sorry for you that you have been fooled into believing these fables".

The chief calmly responded, "Do you see that *stone* over there? On that stone we smashed the heads of our victims until they were dead. Do you see that *oven* over there? In that oven we roasted human bodies for our great feasts.

If it had not been for those good missionaries, the Bible and the love of Jesus Christ which changed us from savages into God's children, you would be roasting in the oven now!" Having heard what the chief's description of how Jesus had changed the lives of the villagers, the sceptic was never quite the same again.

Now back to the gospel narratives, the 12 disciples accompanied Jesus as he went around teaching from village to village. They were there on the boat, when he calmed the storm that threatened to send them to the bottom of the lake.

They were there and saw the gratitude of a man once exiled from home and friends because he had leprosy but now he was perfectly well. They were there and saw the joy on the face of Jairus when his once dead daughter was again alive and well.

Having seen and heard so much, they would never be the same again. And then today in our reading we hear of Jesus sending out seventy-two others with the same task - to **witness** to everything they had seen and heard about Jesus and the Kingdom of God.

There are **three points** that Jesus made when he sent out his disciples, that I would like to share with you. **Firstly**, they were to *travel light*. He told them: *Take nothing for the journey no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra tunic (Luke 9:3)*. Jesus wanted his disciples to be concerned about nothing else but the mission that he was sending them on. He didn't want them to be weighed down by material stuff. They were to be single minded in their mission.

Their task was plain and simple. They were sent out to meet the needs of other people just as Jesus did – that is to speak the Word of God at the appropriate time and to deal with bodily and physical of those they met.

Travelling light meant the seventy-two missionaries had to *trust* God for their daily needs. Jesus was telling them to be like the "*lilies of the field*" and the "*birds of the air*" who do not rely on their own resources to survive but only on the goodness of God.

They were to rely on the God-given hospitality of those they visited. Do you see what Jesus is doing here with those he is sending out? He is demonstrating the vital link between *faith* and *action*. He is saying to them, and to us – "We aren't being sent out to just tell people about faith in the living God but we are being sent out to also show them what happens in our life when we really believe and trust.

The situation hasn't changed one bit for us today. I wonder how many times a week, how many time a day our witness to our faith in Christ is weakened, is even brought to nothing, because we fail to recognise the link that our *faith* has with our *actions*. Our actions can so easily deny our faith in Jesus.

By telling the seventy-two missionaries *not to worry about food and clothing but to trust in God* – Jesus is telling them to not just tell people about faith but let your listeners see in their lives what it means to trust God even for simple things like food and clothes.

2. Jesus then goes on to give them another instruction. "*Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town*" (9:4, 10:7). In other words, he is telling the disciples to accept whatever accommodation is offered to them and not go shopping around for something better.

Jesus simply tells them to accept whatever is offered and get on with the task he had given them of telling the Good News about Jesus. All this leads to an underlying point. The gospel is shared within *a relationship situation*. Get to know people. Be concerned about their cares and their needs.

They were not to be fly-by-night evangelists - here today gone tomorrow. This wasn't the kind of evangelism where you give a quick message at the front door. Jesus knew that for many people it takes a long time to grasp the meaning and importance of the gospel for their lives. And so the disciples are encouraged to not only talk about the love of Jesus but also be the love of Jesus in the community they were visiting.

"Get to *know people* and through *your friendship* with them, let people see how your faith really makes a difference in your life. Let them witness for themselves the gospel in action through everything you say and do. More often than not actions speak louder than words."

The situation is no different today. You can imagine how effective our witness would be if we said, "God loves you, my friend, and wants you in his family, but I'm not interested in knowing that your mum died last week, or that you're unemployed and really finding it hard, or that you are a stranger in the church and feeling pretty lost".

You know, as hard as we find it in ourselves to love some people, unless we do so, we will do nothing but hinder God's work here in some way. Again Jesus is saying that along with the gospel of love go actions of love.

When Jesus sent out the seventy-two men to share the gospel he gave them a specific message to tell - they were to say clearly, "*The Kingdom of God has come near*. God has provided an answer to the trouble that plagues our lives. God has sent Jesus to bring salvation". Joy to the world the Lord is come.

As pastors and loving Christians we spend a lot of time counselling people, listening to their problems and being sympathetic to their situations. Jesus encourages us to do this. But through our listening and speaking the troubled person needs to hear from us, "Jesus loves you.

He has provided the only cure for the sickness in our world. He died on a cross to give us forgiveness and the reassurance that even though we have messed up so badly, God still wants you and me to be his dearly loved child".

That's something we all need to hear again and again, especially when we admit that too often we have spoken loudly and boldly about faith in Jesus, only then to turn around and demonstrate how little we have let our Spirit-given faith change our lives.

When we hear those words, "*Your sins are forgiven*", this revives our desire to share with others through word and deed the same joy that we experience when we hear of the love and forgiveness of Jesus. And let's not be fooled into thinking that our effort hardly makes a difference in the lives of others.

3. When the **seventy-two** disciples returned and made their reports, Jesus said, "*I saw Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning!*" The seventy-two men didn't see anything like that". Jesus saw something they hadn't.

When Jesus sends us out he intends to use us for something big. In our ordinary, everyday lives, Jesus is working out some larger matters. We look at the church at large, and our little Church, we see mundane meetings, ordinary folk, unspectacular routine, people with all kinds of troubles.

Yet Jesus sees heaven and earth being transformed through us. Jesus commissions us to be part of his radical overthrow of the powers of death and evil. We can't always see it, because as humans we are caught up in the every day ordinariness of the church.

Yet in us - in our worships, meetings, Bible studies, ladies group, passing the offering plate, visiting the sick and frail - the reign of God is taking shape. He sends out ordinary folk like you and me to be a signal, a witness that God's kingdom is breaking into the lives of people - through us.

Let us walk together, in the family of Faith, to follow the Gospel path, offer Peace to all, and accept what returns. Let us shake the dust of complacency from ourselves as Christ's lambs, and labor among the wolves in the fields of God.

Even the strongest most vicious wolf among us will fall eventually; let us always live with and offer the welcome of Jesus' saving power and love. Whether accepted or refused.

So, when we look at our little congregation we see only ordinary folk like you and me. But Jesus looks at us and our witness and says, "*I saw Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning!*"

- He uses our faith and the witness we give in our daily lives,
- the joy and peace we have because our un-Christ-like lives are forgiven,
- the change that Jesus makes in our lives impacts others,
- the words we speak at right time – he uses all this and more to bring his kingdom into the lives of others, please don't under estimate the power of God's Word.

God bless our going out in the name of the Lord. **Amen.**

July 4, 2022

**Prayer concerns:** *Matilda Molyneaux-Piper, Shirley Walker, Hanne Bourgeoise, Sven Berg, Astrid Hylland, Ellen Eriksen, Ellen Dahal-Lanteigne, Wilhelmina Tiemersma, Soo Young, Shirley Walker, Pastor Timothy, Sherly Beller-Kenner, Glenn Cleaver. May they find solace in the love and grace of God. The dire tension between Russia and Ukraine, Protectors at various places in Canada, Covid -19 patients, essential and Frontline workers, finally Families of departed souls in recent weeks and months.*

**Prayer** Nurturing, Knowing God, excite our desire to shake off the dust of our own complacency and to immerse ourselves in Your service. Grant special Grace to the country of our birth and the one we call home, that Your Presence will be known in how our lives bless You by all that we do in the spirit of gentleness, and in the name of Christ. We ask through Jesus, our Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit, our Sustainer, who together with You are One God, infinite and eternal. **Amen.**

**Make melodies in your heart with these hymns:**

- **Praise to the Lord, the Almighty # 858**
- **O Zion Haste # 668**
- **Here I am, Lord# 574**

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

***Keisha Marshall, Olivia Thomas***

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

**n/a**