

Jesus has called his disciples; they have been traveling with him on his journeys from town to town. He tells those who are traveling with him, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” (Matt 9:37-38) Jesus tells his disciples to pray that God will send laborers into the fields to harvest what the Lord has planted. As they pray for people to go into the world, Jesus calls twelve of his disciples Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James and John the sons of Zebedee; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon and Judas Iscariot, both of whom are Zealots to go out into the world. Jesus has asked them to pray to God to send laborers into the fields and now they are the answer to their own prayers. They are to go “to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, proclaim the good news, ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, and cast out demons.” They are to do the ministry that Jesus has been doing while they traveled with him. They have seen him do these things, now they are to do it themselves. The disciples are to trust that God will provide for them as they go into the world healing and proclaiming God’s peace to the world around them.

Let’s take a moment and look at exactly who these twelve disciples are that Jesus is sending out in his name. There are Peter and Andrew, James and John, all fishermen, then Philip and Bartholomew, James and Thaddaeus (whom we know nothing about), Thomas and Matthew, who is a tax collector (which means he works for the Roman government), and Simon and Judas who are both Zealots (who want to overthrow the Roman government). So Jesus calls fishermen, a tax collector who works for the occupying government and two who want to overthrow that government. And they are the ones who are to go and heal and proclaim peace? How does that work?

Our own country is so politically divided right now. It is easy, through the Internet, to live in a cultural silo so that each of us can hear only what we want to hear and condemn those who don’t agree with us as bad people. Jesus had to deal with similar issues with his disciples. They didn’t have the Internet but different factions within Judaism didn’t get along with each other. There were the Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots, and the Essenes who actually left Jerusalem to live apart in the wilderness because they thought the whole Temple system was corrupt. That same division is found in the 12 disciples that Jesus sends out to proclaim God’s kingdom, heal the sick, raise the dead and cast out demons. So does he send them out as a group or do they go in pairs?

Now look where he is sending them. They are not going to the Gentiles or the Samaritans, they are going to people that they know. Jesus is sending them out into towns where they know the culture, the language, what the hot topics of the day are. Jesus is sending them, as he now sends us into our own neighborhoods. As Margery mentioned last week in her sermon on the Trinity, we are the image of God that people see in the world.

Just like those first 12 disciples who were sent into the world, we at Good Samaritan don’t all agree with each other politically. We each have our own point of view about what is important in our country today, just as Matthew worked for the Romans while Simon and Judas wanted to use violence against them. Peter, Andrew, James and John

were fisherman who knew the locals and economy in Capernaum. They probably were concerned about the local economy there. They were not so different from us today. They probably weren't any more ready to go out into the world and proclaim what Jesus was doing in their lives than many of us today. They were following their teacher and now he expected them to do it on their own.

It reminds me of doing hospital chaplaincy during seminary. The 6 people in my group at Georgetown University Hospital arrived the first day, thinking well we probably have classes for at least this first week to teach us how to do this ministry. We sat down with our supervisor discussed some things, came back the next morning and he handed us our floor assignments then sent us out into the hospital. We all agreed that we didn't know what was expected of us or how to do this ministry. He said, "You are enough." Jesus sent his disciples out saying, you are enough. The Spirit of God is within you to bring healing to the world. And this group of men with very different worldviews believed him and went out into the world. They were able to set aside their own agendas and go where Jesus sent them. Jesus sent them to people that were not that different from themselves. But they had to trust that they were enough and that God would work through them. As they traveled and did the ministry they are transformed, eventually. Their transformation was ongoing; remember James and John want to bring fire down on a Samaritan town that doesn't welcome Jesus. They carry their social prejudices with them and God has to continually show them that God loves those on the margins. But Jesus doesn't wait for them to change, he sends them out just as they are to bring healing to the world.

We, as Good Samaritan, are being sent into our neighborhood. On July 9th we will gather with Enoch to celebrate the opening of the Family Life Center that will enrich the lives of those living in this neighborhood. Our Community Garden, which literally needs laborers for the harvest, provides food for the local food pantry and education for young children on where their food comes from and how to grow vegetables.

We are as diverse as those first 12 disciples and like them, God will continue to transform us as we bring healing and God's message to respect the dignity of all people into our neighborhood. When we model love for each other in our diversity, people notice. I was just at a Faith Inclusion Network breakfast for clergy this past Wednesday. All the other churches there have ministries to people with various disabilities and challenges. I was able to tell those gathered how we don't have a ministry to those with disabilities because we as the Body of Christ are those with various disabilities and challenges. Good Samaritan lives Jesus' call to share God's love with each other and the world.

Now please take the prayer that you received this morning and let's read it together as we in our diversity acknowledge that we are enough to do the ministry Christ is calling us to do.

We are not given a mandate to judge
or an obligation to convert.
We are not required to argue religion.
We are given power to heal.

We need not muster up the strength.
We are given authority.
Christ is in us to heal.

May I be a healer today;
may I set free those who are bound
by spirits that diminish life.
May I cast out fear with love,
cast out greed with wisdom,
cast out anxiety with calm,
cast out anger and bitterness with deep listening,
cast out hate with forgiveness.

May I bear your spirit of peace,
the authority of blessing,
the power of love.
May I be a healer today.
Amen

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