

Walking with the Holy
Luke 10:1-11

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In the Gospel reading this morning Jesus gives instructions to seventy followers who are being sent out to spread the word of God's love. It's an interesting text because this 1st century instruction offers us insight into 21st century discipleship.

On first glance our scripture looks like a list of what to do on a mission trip. Those sent were to take their journey with no money, no sandals and they weren't to speak to anyone on the road. Once they arrived in a town, they were to offer peace to those they greeted and to share that peace if they were received hospitably. The seventy were to stay in one place and not move from house to house. They were to eat the food that was given to them and heal the sick. If they were rejected, they were to move along to another home and shake the dust off their feet. Overall, the instruction is action driven and quite clear.

As 21st century followers of Christ it might be tempting to dismiss a passage like this as unreasonable – after all it isn't safe to travel without reservations, money and provisions. I promise you that when we sent 31 youth off to Washington D.C. last week on their mission trip, each child and adult was prepared. They knew how they would travel, where they were going to stay, and how they would pay for their trip. We would not have considered sending them off in any other way. However, if we read Jesus' instructions to the seventy a second and third time we learn that the instructions are very valuable for our understanding of how to be faithful today. Jesus is very clear that along with our actions our hearts are to be molded by his wisdom.

Scripture tells us we are to be people of peace – we are to greet others with peace and let our peace rest on others. A few days after the slaying in Orlando I was talking with a woman about her morning prayer practice. She said that she loved the quiet time of contemplation and felt more connected to The Holy because of her prayer. However, each morning her prayer book has a time to pray for peace. She commented that given the situation of the world today, she didn't believe peace would ever reign in the world – so why would she bother to pray for peace. I suggested that just because we don't think there will be worldwide peace in our life time doesn't mean we stop praying for peace. She said it was hard for her to pray for terrorists and didn't really want to pray for

them. I suggested that she envision praying for the victims of the terrorism – the women and children – the elderly – the hungry and homeless. This made much more sense to her.

As people of faith, we know our prayers matter. When we are at peace, when we offer a simple prayer for those who suffer because of hatred and violence, we connect with the great energy of Holy Peace and can trust that somewhere around the world there is someone who is receiving peace. Theologians call this Quantum Theology – another way to think about the movement of the Holy Spirit.

Our scripture also tells us that as followers of The Way of Christ we are to be about healing. While we might not be trained as doctors or spiritual healers, we can choose to be a healing presence in the world rather than someone who creates friction and anger. We can use our talents and interests to build healing environments for those in need.

In response to the violence in Orlando, 40 or so Broadway stars put aside their busy schedules and got together in a studio to record a fund raising video for the GLBT Community Center of Central Florida. In the video, before they start to sing a few of the actors explain what they are doing - they want to be people who focus on love, not hate. Over and over again, actor by actor, they record the words: "only love can conquer hate and love must prevail." Then, collectively they record a beautiful harmony as they sing "What the World Needs Now is Love Sweet Love." It is a moving You Tube video that you can find on the internet.

As people of faith, we are called to be a healing, loving presence in the world. The energy of our love matters.

There is one more fascinating bit of wisdom Jesus offers us today. He tells the seventy that if their peace and healing is not received by those they meet then they are to walk away and shake the dust off their feet. We are not to dwell on situations and people who refuse to accept our love and peace.

The other day I was talking with a younger minister. He is a solo pastor of a small church and recently decided to move into the parsonage. On inspection, the younger people in the church realized that the parsonage needed a complete renovation before the minister could move in. However, a powerful, long-time member disagreed. The younger people got together to raise money and volunteer to renovate finding friends who would donate their time and talents,

but the powerful member still disagreed and a huge tension was created in the congregation. Finally, the long-time member resigned from his powerful position, but the tension and discord left the pastor feeling dispirited and sad. At the same time, he recognized that something wonderful was happening in the congregation – there was a sense of renewal and excitement and a presence of community love and commitment that had been missing for some years. Somehow the collective effort around the renovation project helped the younger people realize their commitment to being a church that serves its community. The pastor realized that the only thing he could do was let go of trying to fix the tension – he had to shake the dust from his feet – and be about healing and love for the newly energized congregation.

Three wisdom teachings for our Sabbath day – peace, healing and letting go of the negative in order to be people of love. As we seek to live out our lives, be a church and be a part of our great nation that celebrates its independence this weekend, we can take Christ's wisdom as our own. We can be people of peace, people of healing and people who let go of anger in order to be people of love.

May God be with us on the journey. Amen.

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