

Luke 10:1–11, 16–20

On October 22, 1978 Pope John Paul II addressed the young people gathered in St. Peter's Square and said, "You are the hope of the Church and of the world. You are my hope." That must have been something to hear because it was daring and it took guts to make the statement. The patriarch of the Catholic Church, the one to whom just about every eye was looking up to for hope affirms the people, even the young and says, "You are my hope." People of Trinity you are my hope. This is the final day that I will be standing here before you to deliver a gospel message. One year ago, I had quite the feeling of anxiety about coming to Trinity Lutheran Church. You know you have a reputation! Very successful and vibrant congregation: 5 services of proclamation (soon to be 6!), a men's bible study, a women's bible study, a co-ed bible study (scandalous!), and soon to be an evening bible study in the fall. Trinity Camp Hill is well known within and outside the synod and that can make an intern quite nervous. And don't forget the feeling that one needs to prove themselves as an intern, I had that desire. I wanted to prove that I had a place or even more that I could be a "super-vicar" and fulfill all demands placed on future ordained ministers. But how would that happen when Trinity is so large and already does everything and is successful! Oh yes, anxiety about personal abilities can get a person all worked up.

The anxiety just described must have been felt by the 70 others that were sent out by Jesus. Could they prepare Jesus' way properly? Would they have enough guts? To fully understand this account, we need to remind ourselves about last week's gospel text. In that reading we heard about three different people who approached Jesus and inquired about being his disciple. Luke doesn't tell us whether these three join with Jesus but what is important is that Jesus addresses each one with the serious facts about what being a disciple means. The first finds out that following Jesus meant that they would be homeless. "Foxes and birds have homes, but the Son of Man has nothing to even rest his head on." The second found out that following Jesus meant that there would be a surrender of personal responsibility to family relations. "Let the dead bury their own, you proclaim the Kingdom of God." That is some tough teaching, the man wanted to bury his father. The third person was told that being a disciple meant not looking back at your old life. A new creation was in the work of the person following Jesus. "No one who grows in the kingdom of God will look back and wonder if they made the right decision." Jesus wanted these three potential disciples to know exactly what type of commitment they were making. Many today are cavalier about being a Christian. Jesus says that we should not take it lightly. We might read this passage just described as a conviction revealing that we could never approach Jesus and ask to be his disciple. What if you closed the Bible right there and stated, "Well, there's my answer, I don't want to be homeless, give up my commitment to family and profession. Sometimes it is hard for us to put all of our trust in Jesus Christ." What if you stopped reading the bible right there or stopped coming to church after last week? Well, then you would miss the text we have this morning.

Today we read about an experience only told in Luke where a large group of people are appointed or "revealed" by Jesus to be sent out with these unique instructions. Go without shoes, without any money, and without wasting time by talking on the way.

Also interesting is what Luke does not tell us. We are not told about any disciples being included. Luke does not tell us if those sent needed to be only men. In fact Luke's author is the most inclusive to women being leaders in the ministry. There is not one name appointed to identify these people as a specific type. In fact the only requirement is that Jesus selects them to go out so that they can prepare people for Jesus' arrival. Jesus says to them "You are my hope." I see a lot of that hope in the assembly here at Trinity. During the Sundaie Concert last week, I saw hope proclaimed in word and song to a community of visitors to the campus. That day there were many who showed commitment by serving ice cream, welcoming visitors, working t-shirt tables, set-up and clean-up—I saw 3 who just completed confirmation reveal hope for Jesus two songs. That is daring and that takes guts, practice, and a community of love and support. You are the hope of Jesus. Look at the many opportunities in which Christ calls you to show commitment where you can grow in following Jesus. Pray that God reveals the mission to you. The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few. Here is an example of what is at stake...

To honor the gospel and its mark on our celebration of Independence Day, let me tell you about a veteran's speech about his experiences in World War II. He was a member of the elite parachuting team with the United States military. He told the account of his last mission where he was captured by the Germans. The man said, "A lot of people ask if I was ever scared about being dropped behind enemy lines?" Of course the risk of being captured or killed was present in all of our minds. "Maybe if I'd thought about it I might have been scared. What we were doing was very dangerous. Even without the threat of warfare, jumping out of a plane in the cover of total darkness meant substantial risk. Now add on top of that the fact that there were 20, 30, or 40 planes carrying men just like you lined up in the sky. Those men were also preparing to jump into the darkness. There is no light on the ground and if there is cloud cover it is impossible to get a perception of where the land and sky meet. Consider all of this and then take into account that there are men on the ground shooting up at the plane you are in." He said, "The Germans are eager to shoot down your planes from the sky. The result is that all of us are quiet while we stand waiting for the jump call as explosions occur around the aircraft. At any moment one of these flak explosions may hit the plane destroying or damaging it. At any moment a jagged piece of metal can slice through the fuselage of the plane and kill you before you even jump out of the plane. This is the fear that I remember meeting. The realization came that after all of the training, preparation, strategy, and planning, after all of this; I may be killed even before jumping out of the plane. I did not have the fear of death but that I would die without having the chance to make a difference. That is the fear that gripped me standing on that plane."

This is what is at stake for us today. The word of strength and emotion from this veteran is at the heart of our gospel lesson. It takes guts to stand-up for freedom, face your fears, and venture into risky environments. I don't want to die without having the chance to make a difference in the kingdom of God. Jesus sent the 70 out to make a difference but they did not make a forced entry into anyone's home or city. They were sent out like lambs in the midst of wolves. That takes guts! They were unarmed, barefoot, and (in my words) without resources making them unequipped for the project, but Jesus gives them the words, "Peace to this house!" God suited them with everything they needed and whether they were received or rejected by the hearer the message stayed the same. That message: "The kingdom of God has come

near." As for my year here at Trinity, there have been many times that I felt near the kingdom of God. You have so much to offer people by inviting them to be near the kingdom of God. And you will continue to receive greater reward for it. You are my hope, and now you send me out to be your hope. Thanks be to God!

AMEN!