



## “The Mission Has a Church”

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost  
Saturday & Sunday, July 6 & 7, 2019  
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Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

When people find out that I did mission work after college, their response is often: “Oh, where did you go?” And sure, I did go somewhere to do mission work. But, through these conversations, I’ve realized that for many people mission doesn’t happen here. Mission doesn’t happen in their local community, in their church, in the place where God has put them.

I see mission as God’s work, the work that we are all called to participate in, the work we can and should do no matter where we are. For me, mission is simple. Mission is being God’s people out in the world. So, what I love about our story for today is it tells us a lot about what mission looks like.

In this story, Jesus is prepping those who will go on ahead of him; these are the disciples who were laying the groundwork for Jesus, testing the waters; they were Jesus’ forerunners, just like John the Baptist. Here, Jesus is teaching these 70 people about mission, what it looks like to be a follower of Jesus out in the world, and I see this exemplified in two of Jesus’ instructions to the 70 disciples: 1. “Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this house’” and 2. “The kingdom of God has come near to you.” These two sentences pretty much tell these disciples – tell us – how we are to live our lives as God’s people, especially knowing that sometimes the world is a scary place, that sometimes the world works in ways opposite to God’s. And yet, at the end of the day, Jesus wants these disciples – and us – to remember that no matter what God is present with us. So, let’s dive into Jesus’ instructions. What does Jesus have to teach us about mission and being God’s people in this world?

Jesus tells the disciples: “Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’” Peace is the opening word; it is the first word that people hear from us as we serve, as we greet one another, as we go about our lives with God in the world. This is the peace that surpasses all understanding. This is the peace that comes with trust in God. This peace comes because we are confident that God goes with us no matter where we are.

Did you notice that there is no assessment that comes before peace is given? We aren't supposed to decide if someone is worthy of peace before we share it. We just give peace no matter what.

I imagine this requires us to serve others, to encounter others with a sense of wonder, not judgment. So, what does this look like? I see this sense of wonder – this instant giving of peace – from the volunteers that I accompany to the Dauphin County Prison. Of all the places in our world where judgment seem to reign, it is in this place. And yet, as we gather with our brothers and sisters at the prison, these volunteers open their hearts and minds and truly embody the giving of peace to everyone – no questions asked. We aren't there to make judgments; we are only there to share God's love, to proclaim that God is at work in that place. Could you imagine our world if we gave peace first, before we gave judgment?

Maybe our political system wouldn't be such a hot mess. The polarization of red versus blue, Republican versus Democrat might not matter as much. Compromise might be easier to achieve. Giving God's peace first means seeing the humanity inside someone we might disagree with. It means asking questions. It means listening to understand, not to respond.

Think about how many languages use peace as a greeting because peace should always be given first. In Arabic: *al salaam aliykhum*, meaning peace be with you. Or Hebrew: *shalom*, which means peace. Or think *aloha* in Hawaiian, which comes from the same word for peace, compassion and affection. Peace is what we should always lead with.

Jesus also says this: "The kingdom of God has come near." This is my favorite part of this story. Why? Because it says so much about who God is. Jesus tells his disciples that the kingdom of God has come near even to the people that reject their message! The kingdom of God has come near to those who say yes and to those who say no.

The kingdom of God has come near. This statement is true no matter who you are with. God is present among all people! God is present among and working through those who might not be Christian. God is present among and working through those who we disagree with, the people we don't like. God is in those places we wouldn't expect or – if we are being honest with ourselves – in the places we might not want God to go.

And right there is the good news, God was at work, God is at work and God will continue to be at work all around the world. And this is our hope as we participate in mission – as we be God's people in the world. The kingdom of God has come near. The kingdom of God is promised to all people, regardless of who they are. The kingdom of God has been opened right in front of us.

So, this week as you go about your lives as God's people doing God's work, I want you to try something for me. Think of this as an experiment. First, open your eyes, your ears, your minds to the unexpected work of God around you. Where is the kingdom of God coming near to you? And remember, it might not be in the most obvious place or from the most expected person.

Second, let's give peace a chance. Contemplate that question I asked earlier: What would our world look like if we lead with God's peace? How might you give peace first this week? Try to suspend your judgment, your expectations. Try starting with peace.

Not too long from now you will hear, "Go in peace. Christ is sending you." Friends, please take those words seriously. Christ is sending you out into the world with a mission: the mission you are equipped to do, the mission that will make this world a much better place: the mission to share peace and the mission to proclaim that the kingdom of God has come near! Amen.

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