

The young church spread like wildfire. It spread fast and far. The spread of the Good News started with Jesus sending out believers. Luke 10 starts with the second sending, earlier, in Luke 8, Jesus has sent out his twelve disciples and here he sends out seventy two of his followers two by two, that is 36 groups. It's not an overwhelming number... we had more people involved in our Vacation Bible School. This message goes out with unnamed people that we never hear about again. They were not spreading this message for fame.. or for comforts... but just because they believed the message they shared.

That Jesus is Lord and Savior. By the year 635 believers confessed Jesus as Lord in China. A hundred years after that, Siberian believers had spread the gospel to Bagdad, Tibet and India. The apostle Paul traveled 10,000 miles proclaiming the good news of God's love. How did this happen without planes, trains, or automobiles? This happened before most common people even could read or write, or post their messages about what they believed on facebook. When people wander into the world to do the ministry of Jesus Christ, they are doing important work.

When Jesus sent out his followers he told them to do what he had been doing—preach, teach, and heal. In the first sending of Luke 8, it wasn't JUST the 12 that were traveling around spreading the word. ... Luke 8:1-3 tells us that women, wealthy women were involved and supporting the mission, "Jesus traveled about from one town to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The twelve were with him and also some women... Mary called Magdalene...

Joanna – she managed Herod’s household.. ((To translate that means She was really rich)).. Susanna.. and many other helper women! These women were helping support them out of their own means.”

Thank God for wealthy women who use their money to spread God’s love!

But in the scripture reading for today .. in the next sending of the gospel of Luke.. there is no mention of the wealthy women again, and instead the pairs are sent out with nothing. No purse, no bag, no sandals... nothing extra.

Our teenagers are currently out on a mission trip. They got given a packing list of items to bring... I wonder how they would have responded if Jesus had written that packing list like he did for the believers in Luke 10... How many calls Rev. Christian would have gotten... if he had sent out this, “Packing for the mission Trip: No sleeping bag, no air mattress, no dufflebags...” Hmm... No ohh poor Jennie in the office would have had a terrible time.... But that isn’t what our teens were called to do in their mission. You see even Jesus knows there are different missions that need different things. In his first sending with the twelve, they had help from wealthy women. In this next sending—they were sent with an expectation of radical hospitality with an emphasis on peace. Just peace. And were to say “Peace to this house!” When they entered and wait to see if peace was returned.

The message spread like wild fire, from Jerusalem to China, to Tibet, to Springfield il two thousands years later

because the Holy Spirit was calling different people in different ways to wander around to share the important message of God's love and forgiveness. But one thing is the same in all of the ministries, the message of God's love and forgiveness is shared in PEACE.

So even though Jesus told these seventy two people to go out with nothing and share the word... I'm not gonna do it that way! I have a two year old and a five year old. That should tell you something about how I travel anywhere. Every time a parent leaves the house with little kids it feels like you need to take an entire store with you. The diaper bag, the stroller, the snacks, the sippy cups, the carseat, the blankie... the list keeps going of things you need to leave a house and that is just to get to church. In this way parents are prepared for what they are going to be doing and taking care of the children that are with them.

But not everyone has to leave their house with a diaper bag to get to church. We are different and each of us prepares to spread God's love in our own way. So today with this Scripture from Luke fresh in our minds, I am going to give you some homework.

In the next few days, I want you to talk about Jesus to someone else. Share Jesus' love and forgiveness out loud or if you are really introverted.. in a letter or in actions.

For some that may be an easy assignment, for others ... I know you are looking at me going... OK.. can we get your husband back in the pulpit now? Where are Trajan, Blythe, and Christian!

Don't worry, you can have your normal pastors back soon! But know that Luke 10 can guide you in this work.

First, as Luke 10 guides us, Don't go alone. You don't have to do the work alone, other people and God are with you. We don't always feel God's presence every moment of everyday. At least I know I don't. It takes intention to connect. There are moments where I am not connecting with God or talking to God as much as other times. But that doesn't change God. I like to think of how I communicate with God sortof how I communicate with my Mom. I don't talk with my mom on the phone all the time... and sometimes even when we do connect its just a brief hello and goodbye. But at all times if I stopped to think about it, I know my Mom loves me even when we are not actively talking, I know she loves me all the time. A relationship needs connection to stay healthy, but even if its not a constant deep emotional experience... its still there. God loves you all the time, stop and think about it as you do your homework this week.

In your work, not only is God with you, but we have others. The work doesn't seem so hard when you are not alone. What if the church had sent one teenager on the mission trip. Just one with the same job... no matter how hard that solo teen worked, they could not do what a group can.

The next piece of advice for doing ministry that we can get from Luke 10 is about how to behave with the people we encounter.

Jesus told the believers to eat whatever was put before them. In a time of strict religious diets... this was a big deal. When I traveled to Ecuador for a semester in college my professor said, "Eat whatever they give you" when we stayed with our host family. During my trip.. that included guinea pig.. cuay. I ate it. Its not that bad.

Meeting people where they are at and accepting hospitality is important. Who wants to listen to someone about anything if they have the feeling of being snubbed? How we treat people will matter in how open they are to hearing anything from you at all. So being kind and polite really can go a long way.

Yet, you can't control other people's reactions.

In Luke 10 Jesus gave believers instructions for how to act when rejected. If you and the message you are trying to share are rejected, let it go and move on. There are some arguments you just can't win. Facebook or other internet forums are one place that can really demonstrate this. But this isn't just about an insult of some kind... this is about the rejection, a rejection of the message of love and forgiveness. Jesus knows there will be rejection and knows there will be conflict when people take up the work of sharing God's love. All of Luke has a theme of the Word of God being rejected. The writings of Luke of allude to a cosmic battle between God and evil; And what will have reign in our lives and in the world.

There are places the kingdom of God has been thwarted by evil. Evil has enslaved systems and people. Jesus came combat that evil. The type of evil that leaves 70 million people displaced in our world. The type of evil that lets children be neglected by flawed systems, the type of evil that makes it painful to read the news and easier to hide away... there is a lot of work to do.

The amount of work to do can be overwhelming – especially if you carry around hurt and rejection. It will weigh you down. To continue on in the work, shake that off, move on, find where you can keep doing God’s work of love... there is too much important work to be done to get stuck.

The last piece of advice from Luke is to share God’s Word it with peace- not fire. Just because the message spread like wildfire doesn’t mean fire is a tool to use in sharing God’s Love. Jesus lets us know he is against that too because earlier the disciples James and John wanted to send fire down on a place that rejected them. But Jesus said no, and rebuked James and John for saying that. That is not the way of our Lord and Savior. This means physical peace, but it also means peace with our words too. I’ve talked to a lot of people that have been really hurt by other people that were trying to share their faith. Well intentioned words that end up burning another person bad.

One place I've heard of this happening is at a funeral. Statements like "This was in God's plan." "They were such a good person God wanted them." Or "God needed another angel in heaven." These really can be hurtful things to say... even though they may be words where someone is TRYING share peace... they come out as fire. These types of sayings can wound someone and push them far away from God ... and I do not know anyone who has ever told me that hearing that type of statement comforted them. So as Christians, let's stop saying those things.... no matter how well intentioned it is.

Now, I do believe God has a plan but none of us know it perfectly. I believe in an afterlife of joy with God, but that does not diminish peoples sufferings here and now. God is with people in their suffering, not the cause of it. People are usually the cause of each others suffering. Instead saying things with genuine peace sounds more like this: "Do you need anything?" or "God loves you, I love you and I am praying for you." Or "Here is your favorite dinner... do you want to talk?" The difference in these is in the first type of statement, a person assumes to know what God is doing and why.

The second type of statement is spreading love and care, the work of God. Peace does no harm. In your work, do no harm.. and if you do, like we all do, ask for forgiveness and keep working.

Luke 10 has given us a picture of what ministry looks like.

It is not us waiting in our churches, but instead being fed by our churches and communities of faith and then wandering out into the world. To enter into other spaces that need the Good News. That need transformation desperately. It can be dangerous but you do not do the work alone. That homework I mentioned earlier, "Speaking to someone about Jesus this week", I am going to do it too.... And perhaps as we wander out there together we can help make this world more loving and caring. My prayers are with you in your wandering, this week and in this life. Amen.