

Karen Hollis | July 3, 2022  
4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

**Luke 10:1-11, 16-20 (NRSV)** After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. He said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest. Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, "Peace to this house!" And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the labourer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; cure the sick who are there, and say to them, "The kingdom of God has come near to you." But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, "Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near." "Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me." The seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!' He said to them, 'I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.'

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be reflections of your word to us today, in Christ's name we pray. Amen

For the last year or so we've all seen our interconnectedness in ways we never have before. The stresses of COVID revealed the delicate system that keeps the modern world moving. On Gabe, our glimpses into interconnectedness manifest in places like the ferry line, co-op, grocery store, doctor's office . The other day I was listening to Dr. Thorne at the Wellness Collective event speak about our medical situation. She said, "when you look at the big picture of medicine on Gabe, we have so many of the pieces. Many more than other places. It's because the community has worked hard to make it so." Factors change . . . situations change . . . needs change . . . and the work continues, because in order to be sustainable, we need more doctors, ferry workers, grocery workers, people to do yard work, odd jobs, and more. We need the wisdom of age and the energy of youth; we need artists to keep us inspired and patrons to support them. We need an expansive vision for life together and a collective effort to see that vision realized.

In our text this morning, Jesus sends 70 apostles out on a mission, using the metaphor of harvest and workers. The terms invoke for us images of people picking our food and boxing it for shipping . . . or produce workers at the grocery store. It might also invoke images of your garden and the daily work you enjoy to bring food to the table. In Luke's case, the harvest is an apocalyptic image . . . some would say it marks the moment where Jesus comes to bring the faithful into the kingdom of heaven . . . for others, it is an indication that the world is about to change . . . it is the end of the world as we know it. Indeed, we are probably in a season of permanent change from the world we knew before COVID. This brings a complexity of emotions and a variety of new realities to navigate. A chapter or 2 before in Luke, Jesus sends 12 apostles

out to proclaim the kin-dom of God. Now, he sends 70 apostles. As a Biblical symbol, 70 refers to the nations, which indicates Jesus is *expanding* his mission to reach the people and spread the Good News. While the message of Jesus may not be welcome in all places, Jesus offers it universally – the apostles approach all the towns, and all have an opportunity to participate.

In some places, the labourers are valued . . . wherever the message of Jesus is welcomed, will also be a place where people value the one who brings this news. How do we decide value for different kinds of work and how is that work affirmed? In a simplified model, those who oversee, tend to the big picture, and hold the power are valued with higher wages. Those who do physical work are often paid less . . . not even a living wage in many cases. Gabriola is an interesting place . . . we have a small economy with a shortage of workers – even with an increasing minimum wage, it's difficult for many to make ends meet here. We also have a whole other body of work here that is sustained by volunteers. The churches, GIRO, Gabe Shop, GALLT, Lions . . . I'm sure I don't need to go on. How are volunteers valued? Hopefully organizations are expressing appreciation . . . but is that why we serve? We offer our time and energy because we are invested in the place we live. We receive the benefit of our collective efforts. This community knows that we suffer together and thrive together. Our sustainability is dependent on our ability to thrive on all levels . . . from offering good jobs with a living wage, to initiatives that keep us connected and contributing to each other's lives . . . and we have to keep working at it.

When we look at community sustainability from a place of faith, we also see our partnership with God. This text is interesting in that Jesus sends the apostles ahead of him. He sends them to “every town and place where he himself intends to go.” In other passages, Jesus goes ahead of us to prepare the way . . . but this time he sends the apostles first. The implication is that his reach is much greater when the 70 go out to meet people, establish relationships, and discern where Jesus should visit. In either case, we are in collaboration with the Holy to realize a bigger vision. It's not glamorous work. Sometimes it feels like we are at a standstill, going nowhere . . . and yet the text this morning tells us the Holy is waiting for us to return, to regroup, to reconnect, hear stories of hope and navigating difficult conditions, be reminded and re-grounded in who we are . . . before we go out again to join the Holy Spirit . . . and dig deeper into the work we've already started.

The text reminds us this morning not to make it too complicated . . . you don't need to take a bunch of stuff with you . . . just bring yourself. Go meet people, build relationships. Jesus says, in whichever house you enter say, "peace be with you." This is the same peace we celebrate during worship – it's an offering of reconciliation, wholeness, and right relationship.

It all comes back to relationships when we seek to realize the bigger vision. As an island community, committed to sustainability . . . we have all we need to work the problem and realize the fruit of our efforts . . . we serve the greater good together.