

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost, Sunday, July 3, 2022, Year C

St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Douglas, GA

The Rev. Fr. John E. Commins+ Rector

Scripture: Luke 10:1-20

"Sharing His Message"

In today's Holy Gospel, Jesus spoke to His disciples from Capernaum – what could be called His headquarters in the Galilee. It was from here that Jesus sent out 72 other people to heal and to preach by saying, "*the kingdom of God is near you.*" Jesus knew that everyone in the kingdom of God has the responsibility to witness about Him to others. He knew that His time was growing short and that He would physically be leaving them and the only way people would know and hear about His love for them, His sacrifice for them, His grace and mercy for them - would be for His disciples to tell others. I have got to say that they have done a pretty good job because we are here today since someone told us about Jesus. So Jesus sent them out to practice ahead of time, to get a feeling for what they would be doing when He was gone.

Jesus never said that it is going to be an easy task witnessing for Him. He tells the disciples that they are like lambs in the midst of the wolves, and then He tells them what to say when people accept them, and He also tells them what to say and do when people reject them because not everyone was going to accept the good news and redemption of His kingdom. What we need to remember today in 2022 is that Jesus wanted the disciples, those 72, to try to go out among the people and tell others about Jesus Christ. You just have to be you – and let others see what Jesus has done for you in your life. That is witnessing to Him which will speak to the hearts of others. There are no rules about where it has to be that you can witness to others about Jesus, it could be on the line at Walmart, or it could be in the hospital when you are having a surgical procedure done. You would be surprised at the people you meet, and they start talking about Jesus. Maybe you start talking about Jesus and they receive it with open hands, and open hearts.

Jesus instructed these disciples to travel light. Today people pack much differently. Have you ever stood in an airport and watched people go by? They might be going away for just a weekend and they have 3 or 4 rolling bags! Those 72 were told to pack extremely light. Jesus' instructions were also to greet no one on the road showing the urgency of their prophetic mission representing God. In that culture it was offensive for people to withhold greeting others. In our culture - we wave or we nod our head to say hello – an example of Southern Hospitality. In the culture that Jesus grew up in, the culture that Jesus lived in, it was important to be hospitable, and devout people tried to be the first to greet a person who was coming near. Jewish teachers of the Law agreed, however, that you should not interrupt your prayers in order to greet someone. If you have ever been to the Middle East – you know how they treasure hospitality.

I personally struggle when I think of going to a strange land, with a different language and culture and different foods. If I am going to be depending on the hospitality of others – boy it is a rude awakening. Having been to several countries in Europe and South America I got to experience this firsthand. I have to admit that I am a little better having been to Israel twice – and some of the unknown is gone. I have just got to ask you - does anyone know what

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“shwarama” is? Well, I didn’t either until my last trip in 2014 – and it is awesome! It is chicken or lamb in a pita, with vegetables and a beautiful sauce. It was absolutely delicious! It is a great to experience and learn different cultures. How about falafel? Have you ever had falafel? It is ground up and fried chickpeas in a ball. Back in 1999 I could not get my kids to even touch them. It would be different for them today. Falafel is just one of the wonderful features of the Middle East. You really learn when you visit people of other cultures. Think of the thousands of Anglican Missionaries who are walking in faith to spread the wonder and majesty of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. All of them trying to remain obedient and faithful in cultures that they might not fully understand – but they are there for one reason - to let the light of Jesus shine as they show others the Way – the only Way to salvation.

In John 14, on the night before He died, Jesus is telling the disciples about heaven and that He is going to prepare a place for them. The Apostle Thomas wants to know the way to get there, and so Jesus answered, *“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”* Philip said, *“Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.”* Jesus answered: *“Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves.”* (John 14:6-11) Jesus could not make His identity any clearer, so that they would understand and be able to share the absolute truth about Him with others. Remember that in just hours from that point – Jesus would be arrested and then in just a few more hours He would be nailed to the cross. He said, *“Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.”*

And so, back in Capernaum, Jesus sends the 72 and other missionaries to follow the model which He showed us – healing the sick and praying. Jesus performed miracles so that people would believe in Him, and He asks us to do the same, in fact, in John 14 verses 12-14 Jesus explains, *“I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.”* When Jesus makes the promise that if we ask for something in His name, He will do it, and this is in the context of bringing people to faith! Jesus did not do miracles to prove who He was, He did miracles to share His love, compassion, and mercy. He wanted to touch the leper who was instantly healed. He wanted to be touched by the woman with the bleeding issues; and He wanted to raise Jairus’ daughter from the dead – not to prove who He was – He did it in the quiet of her room. He did it because of His compassion and love – and He still does that today! Not only are we to share the Gospel of Jesus with others, but we need to be trusting in the power and promises of Jesus! A great way to start is to take home our Sunday Bulletin and the Parish Life which has our Prayer List on it. These are the people in our parish family that need prayer. I get emails

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from people who are sitting in this room today, or are online watching our service, asking me to put people's names on the list, and then they tell me of the amazing and wonderful things that happen because of those prayers. Take this home with you and please pray for those names. When you are having your cup of tea or coffee in the morning sit down and present those names to Almighty God.

People are usually deeply touched, knowing that you would care for them enough to pray for them. Prayer touches people's hearts. When we pray for people, the first thing that we should do is to invite the Holy Spirit to come and to touch them - He will, and they will have an experience of the presence of God, because you prayed for them. That is one of the greatest gifts that you could give to someone.

Jesus asks us to be a blessing to our neighbors, developing relationships with them, praying for them, and presenting the Gospel to them. If we show Jesus' love to others - we can be like Peter who on the day of Pentecost had all these people wondering what was going on with all those strange noises, and languages, and tongues of fire. He got up and said "*this is God, and this is what he wants to say to you...*" That very day, three thousand people came to believe in Jesus and were baptized.

Jesus is not pressuring you to go out, standing on a street corner and proclaim the Gospel, but He is asking us to live His Gospel, being a Christian who loves others, He is asking you to "*Love your neighbor as yourself.*" (Matthew 22:39) Please don't worry if the message is not received, for this is not something new, for Jesus told those 72 what to do if their message was not received. The spiritual battle has been going on since the very beginning of time. As believers of Jesus Christ, just quietly walk away, don't try to argue - but just quietly walk away, and continue to lead your life as a Christian, sharing with those people who will accept His message. Take confidence that Jesus has given you the authority, "*to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.*" (Luke 10:19) Be assured that Jesus is with you and for you; for as He said, "*the Kingdom of God is near you!*" (Luke 10:9)