

“The Kingdom Has Come Near”

(Luke 10:1–11, 16–20)

The Gospel reading this Sunday invites us to reflect on what it means to be sent—to be entrusted with a mission, not of conquest or control, but of peace and presence. Luke tells us that Jesus appointed seventy others and sent them out in pairs to the towns and villages where he himself intended to go. They were to go without purse, bag, or sandals—without extra provisions, status, or security. Their only equipment was trust: trust in the God who sends, and in the people who would receive them.

The words of Jesus are striking: *“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.”* There is a deep sense of urgency here. The world is ready for good news, hungry for healing, desperate for peace. But the laborers—the ones who are willing to go out, to risk discomfort or rejection—are few. So Jesus says: *“Ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers.”* This mission begins not with strategy but with prayer. And it continues not with power, but with vulnerability.

The instructions given to the seventy are simple, even unsettling: *“Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals... Greet no one on the road.”* These aren’t rules for asceticism; they are reminders to stay focused, to remain unburdened by excess, to live lightly and depend on others. This mission is not about self-sufficiency or control, but about building relationships of mutual trust. *“Whatever house you enter, say first, ‘Peace to this house.’”* And if peace is received, stay, eat what is given, share life, and offer healing. If peace is rejected, don’t retaliate—just shake the dust off and move on.

This is such a different image of mission from what we often imagine. There is no coercion, no superiority, no pressure to perform. The role of the seventy is not to convince or conquer, but to embody peace and proclaim that *“the kingdom of God has come near.”* Whether or not people respond positively, this truth remains: the kingdom has come near. God is already at work.

It’s important to remember that these seventy followers were not part of the twelve apostles. They were others—ordinary people. Jesus includes them in his ministry, sends them out ahead of him, and invites them to participate in the unfolding of God’s reign. That is still true today. The mission is not for a select few. The kingdom draws near wherever people carry peace, speak truth, and act with love.

When the seventy return, they are filled with joy. They say, *“Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!”* They are amazed at the authority they experienced—not for its own sake, but because it flowed from Christ. And Jesus responds with a powerful image: *“I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning.”* In their going out, healing, and announcing peace, evil lost ground. But then Jesus adds a

gentle warning: *“Do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”* The real joy is not in power but in belonging. Not in what we do, but in who we are in God.

This humility—this focus on the grace of God rather than our accomplishments—connects beautifully with today’s other readings.

In **2 Kings 5**, we meet Naaman, a commander of the army of Aram—a man of great power, yet afflicted with leprosy. He travels to Israel in search of healing and expects something dramatic. But Elisha, the prophet, doesn’t even come out to meet him. Instead, he sends a message: *“Go, wash in the Jordan seven times.”* Naaman is insulted. He wanted spectacle. He almost refuses the gift of healing because it seems too ordinary, too humble. It takes his servants to remind him: *“If the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it?”* So Naaman finally surrenders his pride, washes in the river, and is made clean.

Here again, healing and transformation come not through might, but through obedience and trust. God’s power is not always revealed in the extraordinary. Sometimes it is hidden in the very things we are tempted to overlook—in muddy water, in simple gestures, in people we did not expect.

Then, in **Galatians 6**, Paul encourages the early Christians to bear one another’s burdens, to sow not to the flesh but to the Spirit, to do good to all, especially to those in the family of faith. He reminds them that the true sign of Christian life is not in external marks or rituals, but in being a *“new creation.”* Paul says, *“May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* That is the pattern of our calling: not self-glory, but self-giving love.

This brings us back to Jesus’ words: *“Whoever listens to you listens to me... whoever rejects you rejects me.”* The mission we are given is not about results or applause. It is about faithfulness, about being present, and about allowing God to speak through our lives. Some will listen, some will not. But in every act of peace, in every gesture of love, the kingdom comes near.

And that is what we are called to rejoice in—not our achievements, not our successes, not our influence—but in the simple, stunning grace that our names are written in heaven. We belong to God. That is the source of our courage. That is the root of our peace. And that is the joy we carry into the world.

Questions for reflection:

- Where is God calling you to carry peace this week?
- What burdens or expectations might you need to leave behind in order to travel light?
- Can you rejoice not just in what you do for God, but in who you are in God?