

## Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Reverend Dr. Daris Bultena

July 4, 2010

14<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

<sup>1</sup>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. <sup>2</sup>He said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. <sup>3</sup>Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. <sup>4</sup>Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. <sup>5</sup>Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!' <sup>6</sup>And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. <sup>7</sup>Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the laborer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. <sup>8</sup>Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; <sup>9</sup>cure the sick who are there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' <sup>10</sup>But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, <sup>11</sup>'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.'

<sup>16</sup>"Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me."

<sup>17</sup>The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!"

<sup>18</sup>He said to them, "I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. <sup>19</sup>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. <sup>20</sup>Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

### **"Stripes and Stars Forever"**

**Stars and Stripes Forever. I'm going to reverse that... I say it is  
Stripes and Stars Forever.**

**Ah, but Stars and Stripes Forever. I can just hear that John Philips  
Sousa playing on in my head. I'm sure we will hear the National Symphony  
Orchestra strike it up this evening on the west front of the capital.**

**I love it. I can also picture Betsy Ross with her blue, and white, and red fabric. I can picture her cutting those stripes...the blue field and her quick embroidery hand making that ring of 13 stars. Flying high and proud it is now 50 stars on that field of blue.**

**There is this great American pride that flows through us traditional folks. It crosses the barriers of politics and is deeper than many of us are able to pinpoint. In terms of world history ours is rather brief. But in terms of impact ours is very long. We have left a long imprint on the world in the cause for human rights, democracy, and freedom. “We hold these truths to be self-evident that all are created equal...that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness....” The words of the Declaration are powerful words.**

**\***

**I remember other powerful words. The words of Scripture... When I think of the word “stripes” it is those words that come to mind. It is the words of the old RSV from Isaiah 53:4 and 5: “Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed.”**

**It is that Suffering Servant Song of Isaiah. It deeply is imprinted as the song of the crucified Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. There is that old sense in which by means of the Crucified One we are restored and humanity is redeemed. “...with his stripes we are healed.”**

**That idea of the stripes is relational. I can sing that old hymn too, “He could have called ten thousand angels to destroy the world and set**

him free, he could have called ten thousand angels, but he died alone for you and me.” Jesus the Christ dies and rises and in that we “who were once far off are brought near.”

“...with his stripes we are healed.” It is that concept of the stripes. The pain and agony that he endured is relational. I think that old hymn has it right—it bears with it that notion that Jesus endured what he did out of love for humanity. Out of his giving of himself for his friends as John put it. Those stripes were about relationship.

It was a sacrifice of love. It was a sacrifice of love for me, for you, and for us as God’s creation. The action is on the part of the Incarnate One who gives it all and presents himself on our behalf.

\*

In the Gospel of Luke Jesus commission seventy and sends them out.

It is a great passage. It is about mission. Jesus commissions the seventy and sends them out in mission. They are to teach and cure; they are to preach and restore. They are to spread the news. They are not to haul with them all kinds of resources. They are to just go and do it. They are to trust that God is with them. Where they encounter difficulties they are not to get discouraged—they are to literally shake the dust off and keep on going.

I have used this passage with the Session of this church on many occasions. I have shared with them the concept that in this passage Jesus sends them out without a ton of resources. They are to get it that on this missionary journey that they embark upon they themselves are the equipment. There is no elaborate need for anything else. They who go are in the Spirit of God and that is all that is needed for this work.

Upon return the stories get to be told. And when they start to tell those stories overwhelmingly it is about the amazing things that happened along the way. They had gone out in pairs. Each pair had plenty to tell when they returned to Jesus. Lives were change. People had grown in God's love. Those who had gone out—their lives were changed and they had grown in God's love. Those they met and spoke with and worked with and shared with—their lives were changed and they grew in God's love.

Wow—it was good...It was incredible...it was one story after another about how God had done incredible work by using them and their gifts to God's glory.

Relational. Mission. Missional. Connectional. Sharing.

\*

Kennedy is remembered for those inaugural words, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but ask what you can do for your country."

It is, if you will, I believe the modern struggle of our culture. In many ways it is deeper and broader than our country—but it is palpably obvious as a struggle in our ranks. We are consumers. Big time we are consumers. And so we look to everything—even to our government—and we ask, "What is in it for me?" "What can I get out of this?" And there are plenty that work the system and at least to some extent that "plenty" who do so is all of us.

As I look back at those original 13 colonies. As I think about Mr. Jefferson, and Mr. Franklin, and Mr. Washington, and Mr. Paine, and Mr. Witherspoon—as I think about them I also think about those stripes on Miss Ross' flag. Those stripes are sewn together. They are held together. Their integrity depends upon their being held together by the others.

**It is about those back then—in their struggles for freedom and in the struggle to be in community. It is about that striped nature of life—that sacrifice of love for others. People doing what they need to do in order to help each other out. People doing what they need to do in order support each other and take care of whatever needs are out there.**

**That is the Kennedy and the founding fathers and mothers and it emerges as a sacrifice of love. It is an old fashioned idea—a basic—the basic building blocks of our country and our faith. It where the founding families got the idea from their faith. It is about relationship—it is about building each other up. It is about supporting each other. That is America. That is freedom. Not waiting for someone else to do it for you. But trusting in the love and support of other.**

**Stripes. Connections. Sacrifice of love.**

**\***

**They lead to stars. Stripes and Stars Forever. The stars represent for me the heavens—hey it is even a blue field. The sky. The stars represent to me that gazing out there goodness that knows in God there is this beyond that is even better than the best of the best moments that we encounter here and now.**

**We call it resurrection... and in the very one by whose stripes we are healed we witness to this incredible resurrection. And for now...for now we do what those in mission did when they returned to Jesus—they tell the amazing and incredible story.**

**\***

**Let your stars shine—because that is how we will be....shining forever. God bless you. God bless our land. God bless this world. And my**

**God bless our stripping and starrng this world and our neighbors. Go out and be stripes. Go out and be stars. Amen.**