

A Pentecost 3, Proper 8
June 29, 2014
Poulsbo
Pastor Alison Shane

Jeremiah 28:5-9
Psalm 89:1-4, 15-18
Romans 6:12-23
Matthew 10:40-42

Sisters and brothers in Christ, grace to you and peace from God our father, and the Lord and savior, Jesus Christ. Amen

“Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.”

Interesting that most of the people who heard this during the past week immediately heard an imperative in it. They heard welcoming as something they should do. If you don't welcome, then you have denied Christ, because whoever welcomes another welcomes Jesus. Jesus said so. In short, we hear the law. Just like we always hear the parables of Jesus and want to turn them into a story with a moral, something prescriptive for our lives, here, too, we hear Jesus' words as an admonition to be welcoming.

But they're not.

Jesus is finishing up his sending words to his disciples. He's in the middle of his ministry, but he's sending the twelve out to the surrounding areas. ⁵These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, ⁶but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷As you go, proclaim the good news, ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ ⁸Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment. ⁹Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, ¹⁰no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for laborers deserve their food. ¹¹Whatever town or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave.”

Jesus goes on to warn them that it will be a difficult life, but that God will take care of them. As difficult as this life will be for them, though, Jesus sends them out with the instruction to take nothing. Rely on the hospitality of strangers. Here's what you're going to do: proclaim, cure, raise, cleanse, cast out demons. Here's what you're not going to do: worry about how you're going to survive.

Relying on the hospitality of others accomplishes two things. First, it frees you for your task. You are released from the burden of taking care of yourself so that you can focus on what God has called you to do. Second, it allows your host to obey God, to live out his faith, to perform her vocation. Relying on the hospitality of others allows them to serve as we all are called to do.

But we live in a culture of, “pull yourself up by your bootstraps,” and, “God helps them who help themselves.” (which, by the way, is not in the bible, nor is it theologically sound). In our culture, we are taught not to trust, not to rely on anyone but ourselves. We are taught to look for answers inside of us, to cure ourselves. We are told that if we don't succeed it's because we didn't try hard enough. We are taught that it's weakness to accept help, and it's a moral failing to ask for help.

At the same time, we come to church, we pray, and we read scripture, and we hear God telling us to serve, to help others.

HOW ARE WE SUPPOSED TO HELP OTHERS IF EVERYONE IS SELF-SUFFICIENT?!

We are the body of Christ, remember? The body of Christ has MANY members, and each member has a different function. No part of the body of Christ can function effectively without the other parts. We are a team. We need each other. God made it that way. God did not create us to be self-sufficient!

So go for it! When you're on a mission from God, rely on the hospitality of others! To deny them the opportunity to serve you is to deny them their vocation, and thus to hinder the work of the Spirit, because neither of you will be doing the work to which God has called you.

So here we are with our healing service, launching this Health Ministry team. And we ask that you disciples let us be the host. As you go on your way to do the work of the kingdom, to proclaim the good news, to cure the sick, to raise the dead, to restore the outcast, to release people from whatever binds them...as you go, let us equip you with the Spirit's healing and wholeness. Let us pray for you, support you and guide you, nourishing you and preparing you for the task ahead. Call on us, for prayer or guidance so that the Spirit can work more fully through all of us. Rely on others so we all can do the various tasks of the kingdom together. Today, receive the healing God has in store for you. The Spirit promises to be with you and in you in a new way today through the hospitality of others. Amen