

**Christ Church Episcopal, Harwich Port, MA**  
**Sermon for July 7, 2013**

**Judith A. Davis, Rector**

**Luke 10:1-11; 16-20**

“Here’s my heart, oh, take and seal it, seal it for thy courts above” (from the hymn, “Come, thou fount of every blessing,” *The Hymnal 1982*, # 686).

Jesus said to the seventy or seventy-two willing ones, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves.” This passage in Luke 10 is similar to the one in Luke 9 when Jesus sends out the twelve. This time it’s 70 or 72, reminding us of the 70 elders who go with Moses to the mountain. Earlier in Luke, Jesus sent the twelve to preach and heal, the messengers to prepare hospitality, and now he sends the seventy to do both! Jesus tells them what little to take with them and to shake off the dust of a town if it will not receive them. They are totally dependent on local hospitality, shelter and food and their task is not easy.

This mission is in the hostile land of Samaria and this cannot be overlooked. They are to be careful and remember they are ministering in a place that will not be welcoming to messengers sent from a prophet of Jerusalem...even if it is in Jerusalem where he will meet his death. And, at the same time it is in Samaria a perceived hostile land that the Good News takes hold and great works and miraculous deeds are accomplished. We might remember the plow imagery from last week. We are to keep moving, dust our feet off. True enough... but keep moving...keep proclaiming the Gospel message of love and reconciliation.

It is clear that Jesus sees the Samaritans as outcasts of the people and that we are seeing in his own ministry the very essential ingredients to the life and work of the church. If we are a mission of Jesus Christ, the “seventy” sent out into the world, then we must measure our success not on the results of our work, but on these qualities expressed in today’s Gospel. Paul’s letter to the Galatians describes some of the qualities Jesus wanted from his followers. Jesus established a new law. This law is governed by the Spirit of Christ. The law of God in human relationship has a particular history. God's initial and singular law is replaced by the law of Sinai which human beings are unable to keep. This then is replaced by Christ and the return to the singular law.

(These quotes are from Andy Doyle, Bishop of Texas, from his blog, “Hitchhiking the Bible” at <http://www.hitchhikingthebible.blogspot.com/>).

Love one another. Christ has brought this one way love of God to humans and into the world. The law of Christ, the law of love, is to be the law which ultimately governs the new emerging community of the church. The church will be known to be Christ's and governed by Christ's law based upon love.

So I'm thinking about the home of the free and the brave. I am reminded on this holiday weekend of the brave ones who have gone out into the world to defend our nation's freedom. I am reminded as well of the brave Christians who went out into a hostile world to proclaim Jesus' new law of love in the first century. I am reminded of two songs that embody this bravery. One is "You're a grand ol' flag," and the other is our National Anthem. Listen to the words:

"You're the emblem of the land I love, the home of the free and the brave." And the line from the National Anthem is "O, say does that star-spangled banner yet wave o'er the land of the free and the home of the brave." So I'm thinking about the brave ones today. Those who fought for our Independence from England in the 18th century, and those who have continued to fight for our country to these many years and for some of you who have fought for our freedom in your bravery. But I'm also thinking about those 19 elite firefighters in Arizona who died being brave protecting others. And I'm thinking about individual brave heroes in our lives: Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, Jr., and so many others. We live in freedom because of the brave ones. And our brave ones who have cared deeply for our country are not unlike the brave ones that Jesus sent out to proclaim the new law of love in hostile territories.

On this holiday weekend, I wonder how we all can be brave, as my favorite theologian, Piglet, said, "I didn't mean to be brave; it just happened when I panicked." I wonder how we can be brave, how we can stand up to bullying, to injustice, to prejudice, how we can stand up for those who are marginalized and forgotten. How we can proclaim the new law of love to those who will hear it. Let us go out from this place of worship and empowerment and stand up for those things that matter in our own lives and in the lives of the people of our country.

Jesus' way was not a way of war, but a way of peace, and the great law of reversal in the New Testament is about empowering the weak ones and forgotten ones and bullied ones and caring for the least of God's people until all are free. As Mary, the mother of Jesus said in the *Magnificat*, "He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly" (*The Book of Common Prayer*, 1979, p. 92. None of us is free until all of us are free. Jesus was brave that we may be embraced in God's reign of justice-love

So let us bear one another's burdens. Let us champion the law of love, let us be followers of the way of Christ, let us be willing to be sent out into the world in the name of Christ, and let us bring change that only love can accomplish. And let us continually return to this Harbor of God's Peace, as our newsletter says, to be empowered to be sent out once more. The choir will sing a lovely hymn by a Cape

composer, Joanne Crowell, harmonized by Noel Tipton. The hymn was written for Dennis Union Church in 2008. The words help me feel that this Harbor of God's Peace matters in our lives and is a community where we are empowered to work for justice, freedom, and peace. Listen to these words:

1. Let this place our anchorage be, shelter from the changing sea. Let our little boats lie still, moored in God's unchanging will.
2. Then, when called to sail afar, let us seek the pilot star. Truth to navigate our course, breath of God to be our force.
3. Let us then, with voices strong, sing a new and joyous song, and new missions undertake, leaving blessings in our wake.
4. When in time our spirits yearn, for refreshment, let us turn to this harborage of peace, where the wayward winds shall cease.
5. Fathomless the mooring line fixed in depths of love divine, so with quiet thanks may we let this place our anchorage be.

May this worship empower us to go out into the world and leave blessings in our wake. Amen.



“Let this place our anchorage be...leaving blessings in our wake.”