

SERMON NOTES FOR JULY, 2019

July 7, 2019 – Luke 10:1-11,16-20 (Pentecost 4)

Jesus sent out 70 – What good news that there were 70 people ready and able to be sent out! Nothing with Jesus is random. The number 70, just like 12, is a significant number. 12 is a reference to the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 princes. 70 refers to the 70 elders of Israel during the time of the Exodus. Why is this connection to the Old Testament important?

Jesus sent the 70 out with a clear and concise directive, one of which was to travel light. Is there a message for us in our lives weighed down by possessions, technology, and busy-ness?

Jesus was clear about them *paying attention*, both to the people around them and their surroundings (the plentiful harvest and potential danger). This attitude of observance was to be grounded in prayer. What things do we miss out on when we are distracted, when we fail to keep connected to God? What opportunities are we missing? Where do we put ourselves in harm's way, particularly spiritually?

We are called to be the feet and hands of Jesus in this world. What does this actually mean, and how are these instructions pertinent to our call as disciples?

July 14, 2019 – Colossians 1:1-14 (Pentecost 5)

This letter was written to the Gentile Christians in Collosae, who were living in a Greco-Roman world, a world which included many diverse religious practices, like Gnosticism, which could detract from the Christian message. It was also a society that was inundated by prostitution and perversions. The letter begins in the typical way, with a greeting and thanksgiving for these people trying to live the Christian life. Note how the greeting is also an encouragement. It isn't easy to live a life true to the Christian calling when there are so many distractions and temptations. What gratitude do you have for your community?

There is a lot of reference to bearing fruit. At this time, we are enjoying actual local fresh fruit – such a wonderful thing after our long winters! In our agricultural communities, the importance of “bearing fruit” has an obvious meaning, whether it is crops, or our

gardens. Paul uses this metaphor 3 times within 4 verses. What is the significance of bearing fruit to the people of Collosae and to us? Note, there is a reference in today's reading from Deuteronomy and the idea of bearing fruit goes all the way back to Genesis – "Be fruitful and multiply".

Paul prays that "filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God." As we ask ourselves how this can play out in our lives today, perhaps we can ask Jesus' question from today's Gospel – who is my neighbour?

July 21, 2019 – Luke 10:38-42 (Pentecost 6)

This short, linear passage is a very familiar one, to the point where people are referred to as "Marthas and Marys). "I am more of a Martha than a Mary." Martha becomes the archetype for the active life and Mary for the contemplative life. It is not common to hear people wanting to defend Martha. It is important to remember that in Jesus time, hospitality was incredibly important and was often related to traveling and welcoming the stranger. Certainly Martha played an important role, but, in Jesus' words, she is "troubled and distracted by many things." What are the things that take us away from the "one thing"?

One of the important ways we can be missional is to practice hospitality, particularly to the stranger. How do we do this without losing our connection to that "one thing" that is the "best part"?

Jesus loves Martha. He said, "Martha, Martha" which was an expression of pity or compassion. It wasn't necessarily what she was doing, it was what she was thinking. In our busy lives, can we distinguish these two things?

Jesus says that Mary has made the "right choice" and "it will not be taken from her. How does this relate to eternal life with Christ?

July 28, 2019 – Luke 11:1-13 (Pentecost 7)

The Gospel of Luke has more references to Jesus praying than the other synoptic Gospels. As well there are included references such as the one in last week's Gospel from Luke 10, where we hear that Mary's act of engagement with and listening to Jesus was the better way. Perhaps this is because Luke may have been writing to people

unfamiliar with Christian/Judeo forms of prayer. Many people in our churches (let alone outside) do not know how to pray. How can we be encouragers and teachers of prayer – and are we being faithful to that practice ourselves?

The disciples have observed that prayer permeates Jesus' life. That his relationship with the Father *is* his life. Each part of this prayer is a prayer within itself and Jesus is pointing to prayer as a way of life. How can Jesus' instruction about prayer lead us to an attitude of "praying ceaselessly"?

Prayer is a complicated business. People sometimes feel they shouldn't be presumptuous in their asking, or don't know what is appropriate to pray about/for. Yet Jesus' instruction is that prayer should be "persistent", which is more accurately interpreted as "shameless".

Prayer is also complicated because people have been hurt confused, discouraged over unanswered prayer – "when I was a child, I prayed that my mother would be cured, but she died." Let us be careful not to offer platitudes in these situations. It is alright to say, "I don't understand" why the answer is sometimes "no" or "not yet", but I do believe God wants us in relationship through prayer. And I also believe that God is with us through it all, weeping and rejoicing with us, and sharing that is also prayer.