



THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JULY 7, 2019

LUKE 10: 1-12

“UNDRESSED”

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go. And he said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore. pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace be to this house!’ And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you.⁷ And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house. Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick in it and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, ‘Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off against you. Nevertheless, know this, that the kingdom of God has come near.’ I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.

- If clothes make the man, I got it going on this morning.
- I’m wearing my Alb and Stole with my pectoral Cross, and my collar under my Alb.
- Romans, Lutherans, Episcopalians, and others developed elaborate vestments over the centuries as the church became increasingly institutionalized and hierarchical.
- I know Roman priests who wear their cassocks every day of the week, shopping for produce at Aldi. Many Lutheran pastors wear their clerical blacks and collar even while eating with the family at Wendy’s.
- To each his or her own.
- But I am more aware of Jesus instructing us in Matthew “Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them.”

- Watch out for your long prayers, announcing to others your good deeds, letting others see you as strutting your religion.
- So, I think there's a natural ambiguity about vestments....
- Then, this morning, we have Jesus sending out his seventy-two key followers with these instructions: "Take no gold, take no silver, or copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals or a staff."
- He doesn't say, "Get dressed up in your finest vestments so everyone knows who you are."
- Rather, "Get undressed."
- In some ways, all these vestments create protective armor. Who messes with a guy dressed up like a holy man?
- On the other hand, these vestments create a distance between me and you. These vestments says I am different. I am set apart.
- And that is exactly what ordination means in the Roman church, from which we all come. In the Roman church, ordination is a sacrament. Romans believe that ordination ontologically changes the nature of the priest—that is, changes his very being. Ordination makes him humanly different from other people.
- Martin Luther had a more functional approach. The pastor is a member of the local congregation, no different from anyone else.
- But, in Luther's view, someone has to step out of the congregation to preach the Gospel, to preside over the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion. Saint Paul was big on the Pastor establishing and maintaining good order in the local congregation. Too many cooks do spoil the broth, so the Pastor is the leader. The leader among leaders.
- Jesus is modeling this for us this morning. Rather than going on his own to spread the good news, **as the leader he sends out 72 other leaders.** "Bring health to the sick, give life to the lifeless, hug the outcasts, scapegoats, and outliers, and kick the demons to the curb."

- I don't think I'm far wrong in saying the old Lutheran model, still in place in many congregations, is: there is only one leader, the Pastor, who is to do everything and more. And the job of the congregation is to compliment occasionally and criticize constantly.
- Not on my watch.
- My model is "I do what I have gifts to do and I equip and bless others leaders to do what they have gifts to do."
- So, Jade leads the youth, and Steve really serves as Associate Pastor—there's no need for ego here. I'd ordain him today if it were my choice. And Mo drives short-term projects. And we have a Communion Team. And a Décor Team. And Bobby Lane and seabass are renovating the social hall. And shareen and jason drive social media. And we have a CLC Kids Team made up of people with decades of teaching experience. And Dave Platt is driving the air conditioning. And hey, I can't play all the instruments, so we have other musicians, and Paul drives some long-term projects and on and on and on.
- But the main reason Jesus sends out the seventy-two with nothing but the tunics on their backs is that he is sending them out as **vulnerable people**.
- **Vulnerable means being susceptible to physical or emotional attack. That's the leaders' job description.**
- But leaders plural.
- As the leader of leaders, I think my primary task is to model vulnerability.
- Because if we are not vulnerable to one another—if we don't get undressed emotionally and spiritually, then what is the point?
- Younger adults say that one of the main reasons they leave the church is that most churches are not receptive to their religious questions.
- You know the old story about the children's sermon where the Pastor says, "I am going to describe one of God's creatures and I want you to tell me what it is."

- “It has a big furry tail, stores nuts for the winter, and lives in trees.”
- One boy answers, “I know the answer is supposed to be Jesus, but it sure sounds like a squirrel.”
- If we’re not vulnerable, then we don’t ask questions of doubt or inquiry nor do we trust our own experience. We all just know to give the “right answer.”
- This doesn’t fly any longer.
- So, I’ll tell you. I didn’t go to church from age eighteen to twenty-four. No use for it. Then I went to seminary as an “I don’t know if there is a God, but I’m going to find out” person. After being ordained, I thought seriously about leaving the ministry and attended a Unitarian church until Deb started crying during their Christmas Eve service because it was so non-Lutheran.
- So as Kierkegaard said, “Out of every hundred men, one is saved by the holy spirit and the other ninety-nine by their wives.”
- My one son practices Zen Buddhism and the other son hasn’t been to church except for his grandfather’s funeral service in years. Laynie only goes to church when her father is preaching. There’s no accounting for taste.
- To be vulnerable is to be a searcher, seeker, a doubter, a questioner, and I don’t knower.
- Kids ask “Where is God” and we fumble for an answer because we’re not so sure who God is and what’s god is up to.
- And that’s okay....
- Because God is first silence and mystery....
- It was vulnerable to sit down that first Sunday and the second and the third to sing and play. Because no other Pastor does that.
- And so, there was a little flack and discomfort and talking behind my back and “Is that Lutheran?”

- I don't know, but it's me. Do I hide that behind my vestments or do I show you me?
- That's the real issue Jesus raises this morning.
- That's the question for each of us.
- Do we hide under our outfits or will we get undressed emotionally, spiritually, psychologically with one another?
- We're all flawed. We're all broken. Some of us just hide it better than others. But in my experience, God comes to us through our flaws, through our weak spots, through our vulnerability.
- But, man is it a risk.
- What does Jesus say to the seventy-two? And again, we witness a Jesus who is not all sweetness and light. Peace, if possible. Truth at all costs.
- Jesus says, "some of the people you will show yourselves to will accept you in your vulnerability. Let there be peace between you because the household is worthy."
- "But there are going to be people who are going to be defensive and angry. Protect yourselves and don't let yourselves be vulnerable to them."
- As a side note, some believers at this point will say, "Well I guess I should forgive them and let them continue to be defensive and angry. After all, that's who they are."
- No way.
- Jesus says, "If anyone will not welcome you or listen to you in your vulnerability, the literal Greek is **"Leave them and do not let one grain of sand stick to your sandal as you tell them farewell."**
- And more "Truly, I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom on the day of judgment for those people."
- What does Jesus mean?

- The primary value of the Israelites is hospitality. Because they have been strangers in a strange land, they learned that being open and welcoming to the outsiders, the outcasts, the strangers, the homeless was an absolute.
- Think about this the next time you see a stranger here at worship. Those of you who are members: have you considered how much vulnerability it takes to walk into a strange church!
- “Will anyone say hello?”
- “Can I be me or is it dangerous to show myself?”
- “What am I supposed to do during worship?”
- “Wow, they sure do stand and sit a lot.”
- Being open to another’s vulnerability is first and foremost on the list if we are going to be leaders and people of faith.
- In the early years of my psychotherapy practice, I would serve the larger church as a stated Supply Pastor. I would stay with a congregation a year or so while they were without a pastor until they called their next pastor. I liked it because I love to preach and I love getting to know the people of a congregation.
- In one German Lutheran farming congregation, the council president approached me after I had been there awhile. He told me the only complaint he had received was that my preaching made people feel too much.
- What was being said?
- I was touching people’s vulnerability. I was undressing them emotionally and they were used to buttoning themselves up the neck and clothing themselves down to their toes.
- How sad.
- And we wonder why congregations are dying.

- This is all I got to offer, regardless of how many vestments I put on....
- It's all any of us has to offer.
- It's what Jesus wants us to offer one another and the community.
- SERMON SONG: **I CAN'T MAKE YOU LOVE ME** by Bonnie Raitt