

Year C – 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost; Lectionary 14 – July 6, 2025

Pastor Megan Floyd

Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

Galatians 6:1-16

Grace and peace to you from our Lord, Jesus Christ, who includes us in the mission of bringing forth the kingdom of God. Amen.

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Hospitality is a big deal.

My mother took hospitality very seriously and impressed the importance of it upon me from an early age.

I can remember going over to other people's homes and being instructed ahead of time to be polite, say please and thank you... and, no matter what, do not complain about what is served for dinner.

You eat it... and you say thank you.

If we wandered out of line, all it took was a look... you know... *the look*...

I came to understand that both extending and receiving hospitality are how we honor each other. Even if we don't typically use that language for it, it remains an unspoken truth in our culture.

Hospitality is still a big deal today, but in ancient times... hospitality was a matter of life and death.

There weren't many places we would equate to a modern hotel or restaurant, so travelers had to rely on the hospitality of extended family... or even strangers for food, shelter, and protection.

And those travelers who had no money or bag, no extra food, no clothing, or shoes... well, they were especially vulnerable... especially in need.

And yet, this is exactly how Jesus sends out his messengers. Vulnerable and in need... Like lambs into the midst of wolves... go, he says,... and take nothing except the good news that the kingdom of God is near.

Go into a place, and extend your peace... if it is received, you will know that the soil of their hearts is good soil, ready to receive the good news of Jesus...

If you show up with nothing but your need and your hunger, and you are still welcomed... then they are ready to be transformed by the inbreaking of God's kingdom.

...and if not... if you are rejected... then just move on. You've lost nothing, so shake off the dust and continue on your journey. God will deal with them later, but you, o messenger of Jesus... you keep going.

Jesus sends them out like lambs among wolves... to go into a strange land and show up on a stranger's doorstep with nothing but their thirst and their hunger... with nothing but their need for care.

Jesus is tilling the soil for the seed of his message... but it's also a test of hospitality.

Will they be received, or will they be turned away?

Will these strangers who show up in need be welcomed and offered food, or will they be detained in cages and subjected to threats and abuse?

The lectionary skips some verses in today's passage... some pretty harsh verses... skipping them makes it more palatable, especially for the preacher. But I think we need to go there...

Verse 12 says... "I tell you, on that day it will be more tolerable for Sodom than for that town."

The story of Sodom has become twisted around bias and prejudice, so let me remind you of the basics of that story...

The story of Sodom is a story of angels who show up at night as strangers in a strange place, planning to spend the night in the town square. Lot meets them at the city gate, and urges them to stay in his home, under his protection.

Later, the men of the town surround the house... with a plan for gang violence and the worst kinds of abuse.

The inhospitality of Sodom when strangers come into town... layered with cruelty and violence... the utter dehumanization of these strangers... this... this is what brings forth God's wrath.

And this... this is the potential danger the disciples might face, and the seriousness of their mission... but the message must go out.

The kingdom of God is near! ...and the world will never be the same.

Jesus sends his disciples out, intentionally vulnerable... intentionally in need... intentionally relying on the hospitality of strangers... He sends them out *to find the good soil... to find those who are ready to be transformed by Jesus.*

But for those who reject them... for those who cannot see past the disciples' need... their hunger... for those who see these strangers as a burden too great for their communities to bear...

It will be more tolerable for Sodom than for them.

Hospitality is a big deal, and no one takes it more seriously than God.

But my friends... despair is not an option.

We are to shake off the dust, and continue in the mission of sharing the good news of Jesus Christ...

We are to continue in the mission of participating in the inbreaking of God's kingdom, for the kingdom of God IS NEAR!

Despair is not an option, because the kingdom of God is near and it is beautiful and full of love... and because I know your hearts are indeed the kind of good soil that welcomes strangers... I know you are helping to bring that beautiful kingdom closer.

This community is very clearly the kind of community that welcomes strangers... the poor, the hungry, the immigrant... you welcome them as siblings in Christ... and you honor them by extending hospitality...

And in this way, you further Jesus' mission on earth, and share God's love here... as it is in heaven.

But there's more to the mission... Jesus urges us to continue in this way... but he also urges us to *tell our story* of how sharing God's love through radical welcome and hospitality has transformed our lives.

The disciples were sent as lambs among wolves... but then and now, we know not everyone is ready to receive God's word. They will reject it... and that rejection may come with threats or even violence.

The message of Jesus has the power to change the world... the power to turn everything upside down... and well... most people don't typically like change... especially those in power.

We can reasonably expect a swell of resistance against Jesus's message, particularly because following in the way of Christ disrupts power and privilege.

But we must keep going... keep sharing the good news... keep following in the way of Christ.

Paul writes in the letter to the Galatians, verse 2, we are to "bear one another's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ." ...and verse 10, "whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all..." not of some... but of all.

I rejoice... that this community knows that bearing one another's burdens doesn't mean we reject the stranger, and *only* bear the burdens of those who look and think like us...

And I rejoice... that this community knows that working for the good of all people does not mean working for the good of only the wealthy and powerful, but in fact, means emphasizing those whose *needs* are greater so that in the end, *all* will be cared for.

Our country seems to be pushing back against this way of Christ... it has become unpopular to care for the poor, the sick, the stranger, and the immigrant... and so, those of us who cling to Jesus' mission must hold fast.

Despair is not an option... instead, I invite you to rejoice with me in the good news of Jesus, and *let your joy in Christ be an act of defiance* against the cruelty of this world.

Rejoice that we are invited into the mission of following the will of Christ and bringing close the kingdom of God, here on earth as it is in heaven.

Rejoice in the love for our neighbor that is shared when we extend and receive hospitality with strangers.

Rejoice in the furthering of Jesus' message when we either hear or tell stories of transformation through Christ.

Rejoice when we care for the poor, the sick, the hungry, the prisoner, or anyone in need... and rejoice if we find *we* were the ones in need and received that same care and provision from others.

My friends, the kingdom of God is near... because Jesus Christ is near.

And Jesus is both calling us in... and sending us forth... to tell the good news of what God has done for us... to tell our story of how God's love has transformed our lives.

We are called to extend love, care, and hospitality to strangers, and to participate in the bringing close of God's kingdom.

It might be a bumpy road, but do not despair, for the kingdom of God is near, and in that we can rejoice. Amen.