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**The Gospel of Luke**  
**XXXIV. Sending Out the Seventy-Two**  
**Luke 10:1-24**

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I was never a Boy Scout myself, but I knew enough of them to remember the Boy Scout motto: “Be Prepared.” I took that motto to heart when my brother and I started backpacking as kids with our dad. If our backpacks weren’t at least 30 pounds each, then we clearly weren’t prepared for the journey ahead. The bulk of that weight was probably all the cans of Beef Stew. I do not recommend it. We were prepared. We were self-sufficient. We could trust our gear and our maps and our instincts.

So, when I read this passage from Luke’s Gospel this morning, I couldn’t help but think that Jesus wouldn’t have been a very good Boy Scout leader. Our text tells us that he appointed seventy-two of disciples to go before him two by two into every town and village where he was about to go. He sent them out to prepare the way, but the instruction he gave them before sending them out is terrible! “Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals?” That’s a recipe for disaster if you ask me. And by the way, Jesus knows that this is a dangerous mission. He tells them, “I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.” If you were going to send someone out on a dangerous mission, you would want them to be prepared for anything, right? Apparently not, according to Jesus.

Why? Maybe it’s because Jesus wants them to be in a hurry.<sup>1</sup> The harvest is plentiful, he says. If you wait too long to gather the harvest, it will rot away. Hurry up! Don’t even take the time to speak to people passing you on the road. One commentator says that these disciples were “working under the shadow of the eschaton<sup>2</sup>.” In other words, time was running short. The day of the Lord was coming. Don’t take too much stuff because it might weigh you down!

Or maybe he says don’t bring anything precisely because travel is dangerous. He sends them out two by two, after all. It’s safer to travel in pairs than it is to travel alone. Next week, we’ll hear about the parable of the Good Samaritan. We’ll hear how a man travelling alone was beaten and robbed and left for dead on the side of the road. Maybe Jesus wants the disciples to carry nothing with them so that nobody would be tempted to rob them. Maybe it’s a practical concern. He wants them to be able to travel safely.

Or maybe it’s for a different reason entirely. Maybe he tells them to take nothing because the journey of a disciple isn’t about self-reliance. It’s not about going it alone. “Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals.” Don’t depend on yourself because the only thing you actually need on the journey of discipleship is God. Complete reliance on God. Later in Luke’s

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<sup>1</sup> (Wright, 2001)

<sup>2</sup> (Craddock, 1990)

Gospel, Jesus famously tells his disciples, “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing.” Don’t worry about these things because God knows you need them. Rely on God. Don’t rely on yourself. Instead of worrying, says Jesus, “seek God’s kingdom and these things will be added to you.”<sup>3</sup>

Easy for me to say, right? Speaking for myself, I’ve never had to wonder where I was going to sleep at night. I’ve never had to worry about whether I would be able to afford groceries for my family. I worry about many things, but survival isn’t typically one of them. But many people are faced with these questions. Far too many. Rely on God? What an offensive thing to say to a person who has nothing. So why does Jesus say it? Why does he want his disciples to be the ones with nothing? What exactly does he have in mind? Jesus gives us the answer: a few verses after he tells his disciples not to worry, what does he say? “Sell your possessions, and give to the needy.”<sup>4</sup>

How does God provide for those with nothing? It’s right there in the text. God provides through the generosity of other people. It’s clear throughout scripture; James 2:15-16, for example, says, “If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and filled,’ without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?”<sup>5</sup> God provides for us through the generosity and hospitality of others. If any are in need, it’s clear that God expects us to care for them. The same goes for the disciples whom Jesus sends. They are to carry nothing because Jesus expects them to be cared for through the hospitality of those they meet along the way. He tells the seventy-two disciples, “remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide... do not go from house to house. Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you.”

Hospitality. It’s a big deal. Jesus expects us to show hospitality to others by giving out of the abundance of what we have. Of course! That’s the Gospel. It comes as no surprise. God gives to us, and we respond by sharing what we have received. So, what should we do? How do we live that out? We put money in the offering plate. We contribute to the food pantry at United Christian Ministries. We serve meals at the Shine Soup Kitchen. We visit the sick in the hospital. Yes, these are good things. We should keep doing them. These things are fit for the Kingdom of God.

But it doesn’t end there. What these strange instructions from Jesus are telling us is, there’s more to it than that. Hospitality doesn’t stop there. “Remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide,” says Jesus. In other words, just as you are eager in showing hospitality, you must also be willing to receive it. The weight of this instruction grows even heavier when we stop to think about what it meant for these observant Jews. If they were to find themselves in the home of a Gentile, it’s likely that the food offered to them would not conform to kosher laws. By following Jesus’ instruction, these disciples would be making themselves unclean. Jesus is telling them that their participation in the Kingdom of God is more important than their own personal piety.

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<sup>3</sup> Luke 12:22-31

<sup>4</sup> Luke 12:33

<sup>5</sup> James 2:15-16

This Kingdom, which the disciples are going out to proclaim, is, at its heart, a community. It's not a hierarchy. There's no division between those who have and those who don't. We are all equal in our need for God's love and grace. But when we forget that fact, and our hospitality only goes one way, we deprive ourselves of the fullness of life lived in God's community. We set ourselves apart as the helpers, too proud to be the ones who are helped. And through our pride, we cut ourselves off from the fullness of the family of God. It's one thing to give money to a person on the street. It's an entirely different thing to eat at the same table as equals.

Preacher and writer Sarah Condon tells the story of a time when she confronted her own one-sided notion of hospitality. She says,

*"In yet another one of my 'live your best life' moments, I started a new scripture study on hospitality...I thought it would be good to study the Good Book in the hopes of making my hospitality mean something. As so often happens, God had other plans. I causally mentioned this hospitality scripture study to one of my closest friends, "You should totally do it," I told her... I was all about my new life changing Bible Study. I was going to be holiest and most hospitable hostess this side of Mississippi.*

*And then, the unthinkable happened. I locked myself out of the house with a 6 month old baby in arms. And the hidden key was nowhere to be found. And my husband was hours away, on a lake, trying to catch fish. So I [reached out to] my dear friend. The one who I had informed of my Best Life Hospitality Bible Study. She immediately dropped her actual life and came to my rescue. We drove to the school and picked up my hangry toddler. She bought me baby formula. We went back to her house and waited for my husband. It took him 7 hours to get home.*

*When we got to her house she... fed my family crackers and cheese... As the evening went on, she ordered pizza. She bathed my toddler. At some point in the evening she handed me her phone to check a text message from my husband (because, of course, mine was locked in our house). And there it was, staring at me from the screen of an Android, the Bible study on hospitality I had recommended to her just the day before. Luckily, it was just me and the 6 month old in the room. Because I started openly weeping. My friend had taken us in, fed us, and bathed us. I was overcome with a kind of indescribable gratefulness... God...wanted me to remember what it feels like to receive hospitality. Real hospitality. The kind where you sit on the floor chatting while your baby rolls around on a blanket.<sup>6</sup>*

"Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals," because in the Kingdom of God, anyone who has need is cared for. To give hospitality and to receive it. This is how God provides for his people. This is how God creates community. When the disciples go out, they aren't bringing the Kingdom with them. The Kingdom is already there. Wherever you go, God has already gone before you. The task of the disciple is not to build the Kingdom; it is to proclaim it. The Kingdom is a gift. Christ's presence is a gift. God's grace is a gift. In his ministry, Jesus walked with us; he taught us; he healed us; he served us; he died for us... though we did nothing to deserve it... he died so that through his death we would have the gift of new life. The great host

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<sup>6</sup> (Condon, 2014)

invites us to his table. There is nothing we can add to increase its bounty. Nothing we can offer except our humble thanks. At his table, he feeds us with the bread of life and nourishes us with the cup of salvation. Eat what is set before you. Receive his hospitality. Thanks be to God.

## References

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