

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

As I read the gospel text for this week I couldn't help but hear the words of Dr. Seuss running through my head. In his book "Oh, the Place You'll Go!" he talks about a journey and begins his book with these words:

Congratulations! Today is your day. You're off to Great Places! You're off and away! You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose. You're on your own. And you know what you know. And You are the guy who'll decide where to go."

I think these words kept coming to mind because in today's gospel text, Jesus commissions seventy others as the text reads or seventy disciples to go ahead of him to every place he intended to visit. Maybe these seventy didn't choose where they were going, but they were headed on a journey... a journey to share the news of Jesus' future visit.

I can just imagine these seventy disciples being excited a probably a little anxious about the task ahead of them. Jesus told them that "the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few." There were many people that had not heard of Jesus. These seventy probably thought, okay, we can go ahead of Jesus and tell these towns and places that he will visit about the miracles that he has performed. We can get people hyped up for Jesus' upcoming visit.

And then, Jesus may have dropped a surprise on them that they weren't expecting. He used imagery that these disciples would be like lambs in the midst of wolves. They wouldn't necessarily be safe. They would take nothing with them. The seventy would have to rely on the hospitality of others in the places that they were going. They needed to eat the food that was set before them, which was extremely important. Food often set distinctions between groups. In Acts, Peter was criticized for eating with uncircumcised men. For Jesus to say, "eat what is set before you" was a huge thing. It took away differences. The gospel was to be shared with anyone who showed hospitality and listened.

Like the seventy disciples we are sent out into the world on a journey. We are sent to share the gospel message with people who are different from us. We are sent into places where may not want to go. We are sent to people who have not heard of God's love for them.

Things are a little different for us today than what they were for the seventy. The seventy were able to cure the sick when they entered a town. They could do miraculous things in the eyes of many. We are sent, each of us with our gifts and skills. We are led and guided by the Holy Spirit.

Two weeks ago, fifteen youth and four adults traveled to Marion, Virginia to go to work camp. We helped a family finish a room in their house, build safe stairs, a deck, and put rafters up for an awning. We went to help this family of two – Jerry and his three year old son Hughie. In our four days working at their house, we did so much more than the building projects. We learned their story. We talked with them. We ate lunch with them. Hughie even tried to run some of us over with his battery operated John Deere tractor. All of us that were there learned many things. I think we all learned new skills for building projects. And I also think that we learned how the Spirit works when we go out and share God's love with other people. As we left on Thursday, our last day of work, Jerry teared up as we were leaving and thanked us for all that we had done. Later that evening as all of the work groups that worked with Project Crossroads gathered for devotions, one of the missionaries shared how moved Jerry was by the work and time spent at his home. He was so moved and grateful for everything that had been done that he offered storage space in his barn to Project Crossroads. The Spirit worked in each of us that week, in ways that we probably didn't anticipate.

The Spirit guided us on our journey. It would be easy to say that we did all of those projects for Jerry and Hughie – but we know that the Spirit was in each of us as we helped this family.

Finally, when the seventy disciples returned to Jesus, they returned with joy and gladness that demons submitted to them in Jesus' name. Jesus warned them that he had seen Satan fall from heaven. He reminded them to rejoice that their names were written in heaven, not that they could crush evil spirits. Jesus reminded the disciples and us that the Holy Spirit leads us and guides us on our journey as we share God's love with others. It's not about what we can do as individuals; it's about what God can do through us.

Now the peace of God which surpasses all human understanding be in your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus the Lord. Amen.