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July 7, 2019

Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

Looking Outward

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be reflections of your word to us in Christ Jesus.

Last week we talked about being on the road with Jesus, shaping one's life around his teaching and being inwardly formed by the good news he brings. For disciples who have been walking the path for a while, it becomes a part of them; it becomes their rhythm of life. What comes next? Is following Jesus the end game or is there something else?

Turns out Jesus trains his disciples because they have an active role to play in the kingdom of God. The original disciples witness Jesus preaching to people along the way . . . they watch him heal some, raise others, and cast out darkness. They study him as he encounters each person in the fullness of his compassion. In the hours away from the crowds, Jesus teaches them the meanings of the parables and prepares them go out and put his teaching into practice. To go out in the name of Jesus requires a shift from looking inward – within themselves and their group – to looking outward at the world they are called to serve.

And that's essentially the conversation I stepped into here 18 months ago. "We've done so much work looking at ourselves as a faith organization – we need to spend some time looking outward at the community around us and find the intersection place of three things . . . our ability to serve, the needs of the community and God's call for us." Another way of saying this is: Where our ability to serve meets the needs of the world, there is God's call for us.

For Jesus and the disciples their first step was really to do what Jesus had been doing all along, which was going into unknown villages and offering the good news of healing and life. But with so many disciples, Jesus is able to send them out ahead of him to places he intends to go, learn about who

is out there, and their receptivity to the gospel. Jesus is running out of time to reach the people, but the disciples, with their own gifts to share and hearts attuned to Jesus' mission, help Jesus work quickly and cover more ground.

As I read this morning's passage I am particularly struck by the emphasis of taking nothing with you. There are many things we could carry with us to do ministry, but none are essential. The disciples carry with them their love for Jesus and their commitment to his mission. They carry with them Jesus' teaching, their ability to stand in their identity as disciples and be fully present with another person, offering exactly what we're able to offer. We lean not on what we can carry with us, but on who we are and how we have been formed along the way. This is directly relatable to our context and most contexts. We lean not on what we can carry with us, but on who we are and how we have been formed along the way.

Being present with people helps the disciples build relationships along the way. The disciples are instructed to enter one house, and if peace is shared between them, to build relationship there and to continue exchanging blessings. They honour the welcome they receive and build relationships over time.

Our families and our congregation have been building relationships in **this** community for years, and for some, generations – we've shared countless meals together, helped in times of need, worked on projects together and walked together through the stuff of life. We know this island community, so as we begin to look outward, we are not starting from scratch. We have generosity of spirit between us and a foundation on which we can build. We know this community so well, in fact, we might have the opposite problem – we might be like fish swimming along, who never perceive the water. Our work may be to lift into our awareness the things that don't immediately stand out to us, but are hugely relevant to our cause. God's call for us doesn't come out of nowhere – it comes out of the life we live here, the connections we have, the relationship we have with the community, the needs that are around us, etc.

One way we're going to try and look at our island community is through a kind of visual social analysis. As the summer progresses, we're going to have a map of Gabriola up in the hall, on which we will be invited to locate our homes, as well as locate ourselves in terms of who we are connected with in the congregation and organizations around the island with whom we have a strong connection. Over the summer we will watch this map transform from a representation of our geography to a representation of our relationships, hopefully giving us insight into our call in God's kingdom.

This is a special group of people, called and equipped to do kingdom work. This is a special church that has already done the difficult work of taking a new shape and a new flavour, readying itself to answer God's call. As we engage and trust the process, I am confident we will find ourselves rejoicing that we are God's own and grateful that we get to participate in this good and holy calling.