

“Say Yes to the Bless”  
Deeper Week 9: Pass the Peace  
Luke 10:1-24  
Martha Stringer

Knock, knock! (Who’s there?) Canya! (Canya who?)

Canya please open the door!

Knock, knock. (Who's there?) CD. (CD who?)

CD guy on your doorstep?

Knock, knock! (Who’s there?) Dozen. (Dozen who?)

Dozen anyone ever answer the door!

We don’t really like it when someone unexpectedly knocks on our door do we? If I’m not expecting someone and I hear a knock on my front door I will try to peer out from an unobservable location and see who it is. If I don’t recognize them more often than not I will not answer. Why? Because they’re probably trying to sell me something I don’t want and don’t need. After all, if I had wanted it or needed it I would already have it wouldn’t I?

And door to door evangelists get an especially bad “rap.”

There is a story about two missionaries who were going door to door. They knocked on the door of one woman who was not happy to see them. She tells them she does not want to hear their message and slams the door in their faces. To her surprise, however, the door bounces back open. She tries again, it’s the same amazing results-the door bounces back open. Convinced that one of the missionaries was sticking their foot in the door, she rears back to give it a third slam. But before she can act, one of them stops her and politely says, "Ma'am, before you do that again, you really should move your cat".

Today we are on the last lesson of our Deeper series and our topic is Pass the Peace and we are looking at the gospel of Luke:

### **Jesus Sends Out the Seventy-Two**

“After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.” Luke 10:1

The “after this” Luke is referring to is Jesus explaining to his disciples exactly what it means to be a disciple. It won’t be easy he tells them. Are they ready to drop what they are doing and follow him?

At this point in his ministry Jesus is on the move with his disciples and Jerusalem is the goal. These 72 were a crucial part of His strategic plan.

Luke is the only gospel that records the account of sending out the 72. Just as the 12 disciples were representative of the 12 tribes of Judah the sending of these apostles may be representative of the number of surrounding nations. Luke’s emphasis is on the commonality of the Gospel message – that it was a message for all people and Jesus wants it spread to all nations. So, much like a politician who sends out a team to canvass neighborhoods prior to an election Jesus sends messengers to the places he

intends to visit. He knows he will not pass this way again as this coming journey to Jerusalem is also his journey to the cross. If people don't respond to his mission this time it may be too late. But unlike a typical politician, Jesus is not re-packaging an existing agenda with trumped up promises. He is introducing a radical new administration not tied to any existing political party. We know this because he offended all of the political parties of his by declaring his kingdom was not of this world. Jesus' vision of the kingdom was going in the opposite direction of the current political climate which was all about war and violence. The messiah they were expecting would bring God's justice swiftly and get rid of their enemies once and for all. Jesus Messiah's agenda was about peace.

"It grew directly out of his knowledge and love of Israel's God as the God of generous grace and astonishing, powerful, healing love."

N.T. Wright's Luke For Everyone, page 122

So these 72 apostles are on an evangelistic mission. We know, because we've been told time and again, about the power of telling someone else about Jesus Christ. And yet, as Christians it's one of our least favorite things to do.

A Study by The Christian Post found:

"A majority of churchgoers in the U.S. believe that it's essential to share their faith with non-believers, but a large number of those are not doing so,

"When it comes to discipleship, churchgoers struggle most with sharing Christ with non-Christians."

The study found that 80 percent of those who attend church one or more times a month believe they have a personal responsibility to share their faith, but 61 percent have not told another person about how to become a Christian in the previous six months.

The survey also asked how many times they have personally "invited an unchurched person to attend a church service or some other program at your church?" Nearly half (48 percent) of church attendees responded "zero."

Study: Churchgoers Say Sharing Faith Essential, Many Never Do  
The Christian Post, By [Alex Murashko](#), CP Contributor | Aug 15, 2012

I think in general the Woodside community is doing better than that survey suggests but in reality the job is never done. Jesus, just as he appointed the 72 to prepare the way for his coming then, still needs workers today, to say "yes, I will go and bless someone else with the good news."

Look what he tells them:

"The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

We are called to be his workers in his fields. He is doing the hard work of planting seeds in people's hearts and we, because we call him Lord and Savior are chosen to nurture

the crop of individuals in our lives and those we meet to help them find the ultimate farmer – the Father.

And we don't really need any special training to do it. We don't know much about these 72 apostles other than they were appointed. Notice they were not "anointed" which implies there was some special ceremony to prepare them. They weren't students of religious studies or trained in theology. They were most likely, as were most of the 12 disciples, trade workers. We also don't know much about their mindset. Were they eager to do this? Afraid? Just a sentence later Jesus tells them:

"Go! I am sending you out like a lamb among wolves!" Luke 10:3

I don't know about you but if someone told me that I might take 3 giant steps backwards. But they didn't. They were appointed by Jesus which means they were chosen and when God chose them he then "equipped" them for the task. So they said "Yes." How did he equip them? With specific instructions. First Jesus tells them:

"Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road."  
Luke 10:4

For a chronic over packer like me this could be a stumbling block. My philosophy on traveling light is: "It is better to have brought it and not have needed it than to have needed it and not have brought it." Not so when you are doing God's work. He is telling them to trust him to provide. To not rely on the stuff or be distracted from the intention of the message. We at church fall victim to this all the time. We get caught up in the semantics. I have a recurring nightmare that I'll get up here and the power will go out and I won't have the technology I need to present this message. Or right before we have to produce bulletins, the copier will go on the fritz. Friends, the power never goes out when God is in charge.

This instruction to travel light also implies they are to make themselves vulnerable because he tells them:

"When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you. Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you," Luke 10: 5-7

When you are a guest you are dependent on another's hospitality. He advises them to be good guests. To bless their hosts by offering peace to their household. To spend time eating and drinking with them. Get to know them. He tells them "don't move around from house to house." Notice, he doesn't say "stay there until they agree to convert!" he wants the apostles to spend time with them and work at establishing a relationship. Let them know you care. Sharing your faith is really all about relationships. When we invest time in them, when people know we genuinely care about them, they will care about what we have to say. It is not about arguing with them until they come around to your way of thinking.

In fact, please don't argue with anyone about your faith. It doesn't work! A person's heart has to be receptive. That is the job of the Holy Spirit. And people are on all different places on their path of faith. In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus tells the story

of a farmer who scatters seed on different types of soil. Some grow, some do not. Jesus explains:

“A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. Whoever has ears, let them hear.” Matthew 13:3-9

Again, what is significant to me is what he doesn't say. He doesn't say just throw the seed on the good soil. He wants us to throw out seeds everywhere.

I came to faith as an adult. In fact I was baptized here at Woodside when I joined the church in 1995. But a few years before that I was rocky soil. I sensed something was missing. My husband Paul and I were invited to neighbor's house for dinner and they were open about their faith and connection with church...and that made me uncomfortable. I saw a Sunday school drawing of Jesus on display on their refrigerator...and that made uncomfortable. Why? You have to understand that Jesus was in no way shape or form part of my vocabulary. I didn't know what that meant. But that experience stuck with me. Even though I wasn't receptive, that couple threw out seeds. It took a few years...and hey, I'm still growing.

There is something else notable about what Jesus does not include in his instructions to the 72. He says nothing about quoting a lot of scripture or being a Biblical scholar. Think about how you came to know what it meant to call Jesus Lord and savior. Did someone read you a Bible passage and suddenly everything was clear? Or was it more of a process where over time Jesus revealed himself to you like he did for the 2 travelers on the road to Emmaus after his resurrection?

Because they are told not to move around from house to house doesn't mean there is not a sense of urgency here. Jesus is training the apostles while he is still with them and he wants them to train others, so they will continue on with his mission after he goes to the cross.

But he doesn't want them to spend a lot of time if they encounter people who are not receptive to hearing the message. He says:

“...when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your town we wipe from our feet as a warning to you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God has come near.'” Luke 10:10-11

Regardless of whether they encountered open or closed hearts in the towns they visited the message they were instructed to share was the same:

“The kingdom of God has come near to you.” Luke 10:9

One word of caution here: sharing the gospel can be risky business. Remember his warning as Jesus sends them out:

“Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves!” Luke 10:3

Not exactly words of encouragement! But the truth is that some of our friends and family, while they may not eat us for lunch, will not want to hear about our faith or will be suspicious of some ulterior motive. Fear of rejection is one of the main reasons we don't share our faith. But maybe, as we talk to others about God's love and forgiveness we'll find we are talking to a lamb in wolves clothing. There are people all around us, in our homes, in our neighborhoods, in our schools, in our offices, who need to discover what it means to be connected to Christ and actively involved in a faith based community.

Last week we had a recovery worship service in this building and Scott Burgess who faithfully serves the Christian Life Prison and Recovery Ministry told me there was an individual who was just released from prison who they came to the Dave Pettigrew concert on Saturday night and the Recovery service the next day. Why is that so significant? Because Scott also told me that:

a former inmate is 85% more likely to go back to prison if he or she don't get involved with a faith based community. If they do, the rate of recidivism drops to 10%.

Isn't that worth the risk?

Christmas is coming and it's a natural time for believers and non-believers to think about going to Church. We will have invitation post card available to all of you which you can use to extend an invitation to someone you know who may not have a place to worship.

Studies show:

“The personal invitation is an effective way to break down any real or perceived barriers one might have to walking into a new church building or being willing to engage in a new circle of people. Knowing whose image each of us bear, we cannot afford to underestimate the power of a personal invitation.”

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2014/july/power-of-invitation-our-god-pursues-lost-and-so-should-we.html>

Will you invite someone to say yes to the bless and worship with you this Christmas?

You'll find the risk is worth the reward because when we say yes to the charge to bless others we receive blessing ourselves. The apostle's did:

We read:

“The seventy-two returned with joy and said, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.” Luke 10: 17

And Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.” Luke 10:21

I met Danielle Ziembra when we were cast together in a community theater production of Steel Magnolias. When you do theater you spend a lot of time with your cast mates. As Dani and I got to know one another I had a chance to share my faith with her and share about my connection to Woodside. After the show closed we stayed in touch. But it wasn't until about 8 months later that Dani called and asked if I would meet her at Woodside for a worship service. And now she is a worship leader in our Celebration Praise Band. And she introduced her mom Eileen to Woodside and now Eileen is attending and in a growth group. One conversation encouraged two people to connect with a faith based community and re-connect their relationship to Jesus Christ. And I get so much joy seeing them here. If each one of us did that our community could grow 3-fold!

We don't need to be anointed, wise or learned to say yes, I will go, I will take a risk. I will share what I know about you with others and invite them to come learn more. When you do you bless others and yourself.

Jesus is calling us to go... will you say yes to the bless?