

St John United Church of Christ
Rev. Barbara Lohrbach
July 4, 2010

Luke 10:1-11 **“Interdependence Day”**

After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. ²He said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. ³Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. ⁴Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. ⁵Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this house!’ ⁶And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. ⁷Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the laborer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. ⁸Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; ⁹cure the sick who are there, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ ¹⁰But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, ¹¹‘Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near.’

Jesus sent these “missionaries” ahead of him not alone, but in pairs. The example is team work...we do not need to go it alone...we should be partners. Remember school days—report cards that said “plays well with others.”

Today is July 4—the day we celebrate as Independence Day. Independence is a peculiar thing. We struggle with it our whole lives—independent of our parents to become dependent on friends or partners; independent of school so we can become dependent on employers.

Independence is not, it would seem, to be free of any burdens. One’s independence from one thing simply reinforces independence in another way.

We are created to be together. We are created to help one another. We are created to go two by two, or four by four, or two by three—not be alone, not to go it alone. Interdependence, not independence is the biblical story. Interdependence—depending on each other; unable to exist or survive without each other.

It seems like all I hear is how busy everybody is and that includes me! But that is nothing compared to the exhausting lives that some live through no choice of their own. Illness or accident—broken relationships are part and parcel of living.

Why does it seem that some have so much with which to contend? Is it possible that this human interdependence, this created to be together stuff means that those of us who are able, help carry the load for those who are differently abled in this world?

Did Jesus understand in sending these first folks out two by two that one was going to have more physical stamina and one was going to carry the emotional load better...and that together they could handle the tasks?

When a friend or family member gets cancer or heart problems or any sort of illness, we are suddenly confronted by questions and worries. And yet there are many who carry life’s struggles

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with grace and dignity. The ones who are able to do so, seem surrounded by partners, by family, by a support system...two by two, three by three, four by four....

Remember Mattie Stepanek...the young boy who died at 13 from the neuromuscular disease, Dysautonomic Mitochondrial Myopathy. When Mattie was born, he was not expected to live 24 hours. He also had three siblings with the same disease that died by the age of 4. And his mother has the adult onset of this disease as well.

Has done one cope? Is this the plan God had for Mattie and his family?

I don't know what the Stepaneks thought about the whole of their situation, but I do know that Mattie was a gift to the world in his 13 years. He took what life handed him and he made the best of it, every day of his life. Mattie's gift of poetry, his gift of persistence beating the odds that said he wouldn't make it at all, his gift of hope in the face of adversity are reminders that life is a gift to be lived. Two things kept him going—his mother and God...Mattie's partners.

We are created to be together. We spend too much time on the things that divide and separate, and not nearly enough time on the things we have in common. We spend too much time worrying about things that will never find a cure for mitochondrial myopathy or cancer or diabetes. We spend too much time judging and not enough time loving.

Mattie's poem written after the towers fell on September 11, 2001

We need to stop.
Just stop.
Stop for a moment.
Before anybody
Says or does anything
That may hurt anyone else.
We need to be silent.
Just silent.
Silent for a moment.
Before we forever lose
The blessing of songs
That grow in our hearts.
We need to notice.
Just notice.
Notice for a moment.
Before the future slips away
Into ashes and dust of humility.
Stop, be silent, and notice.
In so many ways, we are the same.
Our differences are unique treasures.
We have, we are, a mosaic of gifts
To nurture, to offer, to accept.
We need to be.

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Just be.
Be for a moment.
Kind and gentle, innocent and trusting,
Like children and lambs,
Never judging or vengeful
Like the judging and vengeful.
And now, let us pray,
Differently, yet together,
Before there is no earth, no life,
No chance for peace.

September 11, 2001
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