

“Peace” – Rev. Jennifer Adams

July 4, 2010 Proper 9C

In the gospel passage we just heard Jesus was beginning the process of sending forth apostles; he sent them ahead of him to every town to which he intended to go. Jesus was moving toward Jerusalem we heard last week. There is an urgency and an intensity to his work at this point and he needed help getting the work done so he appointed 70 others. They were to travel light – no purse, no bag no sandals – and they were to think of their work as tending to the harvest. The seeds had been planted but God needed laborers in the fields, “the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few,” Jesus told them. And besides the pressure of the work being urgent, the context wouldn’t necessarily be easy: “I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves,” Jesus said. Like last week, all who followed were told that being a disciple wasn’t for the faint of heart.

And yet when it came right down to it, what was the work they were given to do? Were the 70 sent forth to construct churches? To establish life-long curriculum that balanced tradition with innovation and an awareness of learning styles while also acknowledging the contemporary challenge of busy family schedules? Were the 70 called to renovate, renew, and re-roof the building while making sure that the costs were low and the completed spaces were at one time practical, holy and done in good taste? Were they to consider the larger issues facing the Communion and also engage in serious ecumenical dialogue while maintaining both their institutional integrity and the larger desire for unity? Actually, no. They weren’t asked to do any of those things. Here’s what Jesus told the seventy to do, “When you enter a house, offer your peace.” Period. Either your peace will land on someone who shares in it, it will “rest on them” were the words Jesus used, or “your peace will return to you” and you can offer it somewhere else. That was apparently what it meant to be “laborers in the harvest.” It wasn’t easy work. The challenges were made clear in this passage but bottom line was that to labor toward the harvest of God was to know peace and to share it.

Which isn’t to say that all of those other things aren’t important to our life as church today and you know that to some extent, my heart is in all of them. And if you are a leader here in any capacity you have to wrestle with those kinds of things. We need spaces that help us gather as God’s people; their beauty can be part of the glory given and their functionality can help us receive and celebrate all who come. And we are called to be life-long learners, because we are people who continue to emerge into faith over time and our planning and programs offer opportunities for that kind of ongoing growth. And our brothers and sisters around the globe in this Church are our brothers and sisters in this Church and being one is part of the beauty and the challenge of this call. But one of the ironies of being church, of being not just 70 but being the millions and millions sent forth today, is that we can become so busy being church that we forget to be peace. It’s like a family together that’s so intent on being family that they forget to be love for each other. We forget to offer that peace among us and beyond us and to ground ourselves in it as we go. And this isn’t a new problem. Paul’s letter to the Galatians and actually most of the epistles address the issue of the church so busy being church that it occasionally forgets to be all those things that Christians are to be: love and peace and mercy and grace. And so we who are

church need passages like the gospel today to remind us that sharing that peace is what being laborers in the harvest looks like.

And part of the amazing thing about that is that according to Jesus, peace is one of the rare things that can never go wasted. Did you catch that? Peace offered will either land somewhere where it's needed or wanted, in which case it will be shared --- or that peace will be rejected in which case nothing is lost - "it returns to you," Jesus told them. Unlike almost anything else, with peace there is absolutely nothing to lose and there is always a plentiful harvest to gain.

And no vestry decision is needed to move forward or outward or inward with the presence of peace. No building renovation can preclude the presence of peace. There is no member of the Communion that wouldn't claim peace as a desired goal and there isn't a curriculum around that wouldn't include peace as one of its desired learning outcomes. Leadership, breathe easy.

Part of our job as those who are busy being church is to help peace happen. To do the work of rediscovering in ourselves over and over again and to let it be alive among us, tending the crops that are us. As we work on the Commons this summer offer the busy people in that space your peace. It will surely find a place to land. And whether you're resting on the beach or here planning for the Fall let peace be in your heart; let it be what you breath in and out as you go. And as we move forward as Church here and abroad may peace be that which motivates the all the work that we do, participating fully in the bountiful harvest meant for all.

Amen.