

## WELCOME 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2025 – 7 Epiphany '25 C

Luke 10:1-12 & 17-20

**Welcome!** It's great to be together again today! Along with your worship order you have in your hands & **Bible Study Qs** that are able to lead you deeper into God's word/work in your life, & help you share that w/ someone else. We also use them for our **Zoom Bible Study Catch-ups on Friday @ 1p.m.** Link is on website...

### **As we move into this week...**

**Heroes** People we admire...look up to...emulate...tell our kids to watch & learn. Sports heroes. Political heroes. Faith heroes. Social justice heroes. Science & exploration heroes...Heroes of all shapes & sizes. My list wouldn't necessarily be your list wouldn't necessarily be someone else's or anything like one you'd get off the internet...popular survey heroes.

Today we'll meet 72 nameless faceless heroes...like you & me IN EVERY WAY. Followers of Jesus sent by him to go where Jesus already is...as agents of peace found only in him...w/ authority the world can't match...living a victory nothing on earth can provide.

**When** the seventy-two disciples returned, they joyfully reported to him, "Lord, even the demons obey us when we use your name!" "Yes," Jesus told them, "I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning! Look, I have given you authority over all the power of the enemy, & you can walk among snakes & scorpions & crush them. Nothing will injure you. But don't rejoice because evil spirits obey you; rejoice because your names are registered in heaven."

**God** has called Living Water Fellowship to be a vibrant Christian community that glorifies God by inviting all people to become disciples of Jesus who grow in his grace and go in his power to show his love to the world

The "why" for you/me...Living Water...**go** in his power...Called by God for God's glory... Inviting people into a life of living w/ Jesus as Jesus directs...Growing in likeness to him & being empowered by the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the grave...obeying his command to love others as he loved us...That's the journey of every follower of Jesus.

You are an instrument of God's peace and an agent of his kingdom!

*Let's pray...then explore & experience that together...*

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

*Father, in the midst of the clamour of our lives...Take from us the tension that makes peace impossible. Take from us the fears that keep us silent. Take from us the worries that blind our sight to your provision. Take from us the distress that hides your joy.*

*Help us to know that you are with us, that we are in your care, that we are held in your love and that we are one with you in union with Jesus Christ...We pray in Jesus' Name. AMEN.*

*Let's hear God's word...*

### **FAITH CHAT:**

1. Have you ever been given what seemed an impossible task?  
*What was it? What did you do?*
2. What do you think it means to say "the Kingdom of God is near"?

## 7 Epiphany '25 C – ANSWERING THE “WHY?”: BATTLES THAT MATTER

I mentioned heroes earlier...as a kid...mine were mostly of the sports variety...they may not have been the biggest stars in their game, but my recollection is they were the guys who always seemed to be enjoying their game So it's no surprise really (as I have mentioned <sup>b/4</sup>) that my Biblical hero is Caleb – Joshua's counterpart in Exodus/conquest of the Promised Land. Caleb...the only other Israelite along w/ Joshua who genuinely trusted God would bring his people into the land God had promised them. Everyone else was afraid of the walled cities, huge armies, & larger than life soldiers (giants), but Caleb & Joshua argued for faith: trusting God to rout the land's inhabitants & lead them into his promise. Caleb was adamant...there was no wall too high, no army to fierce, no battle to ferocious, no challenge too great to separate God's people from the fulfillment of God's promise. Caleb *tried to quiet the people as they stood before Moses. “Let's go at once to take the land,” he said. “We can certainly conquer it!”* – Num 13:30

40 years later...when then unfaithful frightened disobedient generation have all died in the wilderness & the conquest is underway under Joshua's leadership, we see Caleb in what I believe is his finest hour. He's been in the thick of battle & comes to ask permission to claim the land that is allotted to his tribal clans: Now, *as you can see, the LORD has kept me alive & well as he promised for all these 45 years since Moses made this promise — even while Israel wandered in the wilderness. Today I am 85 years old. I am as strong now as I was when Moses sent me on that journey. My strength now is as my strength was then, for battle as well as for going out & coming in.* – Josh 14:10-11 @ 85 years of age he makes the bold claim that he can get it done on the battlefield & anywhere else his feet take him. My hero.

But we just met 72 of my other heroes...& we know precious little about them. Ages? Feats of daring? Battles? Home life? Nothing...except... The Lord *now chose seventy-two other disciples & sent them ahead in pairs to all the towns & places he planned to visit.* These are not the 12...the original disciples/apostles. These 72 are from the mob that always seemed to be following in the dust trail of Jesus, the 12 & the women who we know were always in close company. We know nothing else. There is no record...no “gospel according to the 72”...no early church testimony...just their report to Jesus when they return... *we'll get there BUT...* Let's do this first...

As Lk recounts the life of Jesus in his 2-vol work Lk/Acts, this is now the 2<sup>nd</sup> time Jesus dispatches disciples. In Lk 9 he sends out the 12. Here he sends out 72 more. Now the 12 are the beta-version of the church...a draft copy of us. They are not super-disciples...high-octane-faith experts...the unrefined version of us - the church. The 72 then **ARE** us. Jesus has shown the rest of his followers what to expect in the 12.

**NOW** it's their turn. **THEY ARE US.** As Lk narrates the on-going mission & ministry of Jesus this sending is repeated over & over...What are we supposed to see in that? What are Jesus, the Holy Spirit & Luke hoping we get? THIS...

Every Christian is sent. There are no unsent Christians. Every follower of Jesus is under that mandate. Every one of us. The 12 **AND** the 72 receive the same charge: announce the Kingdom w/ Jesus' authority over evil/brokenness...If you compare the 2 sending accounts in Lk 9 & 10, they're basically the same. Which means... Every Xn is sent. There are no unsent Xns. The 12. The 72...lather rinse repeat... you & me & so on...generation to generation...

But <sup>b/4</sup> we get stuck in excuses (I'm just not like that...not my gifting) or the guilts (what a crummy disciple I am) let's pay close attention to what always proves true: Jesus never just calls the equipped, he equips the called...& the called is us. Every Xn is sent. There are no unsent Xns. Every follower of Jesus is under that mandate...Every one. Every one of us is equipped by Jesus for his call. So...where's the joy & strength here in Jesus' call? The Lord *now chose seventy-two other disciples & sent them ahead in pairs to all the towns & places he planned to visit.* Everywhere you go, Jesus already is. Think about that a minute...as a sent follower of Jesus, everywhere I go Jesus already is. I'm going where he planned to visit. Where did Jesus go? Fishing. Funerals. Wedding. Town watering hole. Market. Worship. Parties. Hung out w/ his friends. Stepped into the lives of strangers. Sick people. Went to places people worked. “Low end” of town. Any of those the sorts of places you go during your week? Everywhere you go Jesus already is You are not in any of those places w/o him.

But even better...Everywhere you go, Christ's authority is yours. Whenever *you enter someone's home, first say, ‘May God's peace be on this house.’...Heal the sick & tell them, ‘The Kingdom of God is near you now.’...I have given you authority over all the power of the enemy, & you can walk among snakes & scorpions & crush them. Nothing will injure you.* Here's what I mean by Christ's authority is yours...*May God's peace be on this house.* I know I've said <sup>b/4</sup> but to the Jewish hearer...1<sup>st</sup> audience of disciples 1<sup>st</sup> readers (so we need to listen) to bless something is to make it happen. “May” is **NOT** “maybe.” We use “may” as a wish/polite request, “may I have some more cake?” **HERE...** To bless conveys God's expressed good intention to the person/place/thing blessed. To bless creates a new reality. In every relationship...every circumstance of our lives we have Jesus' authority to speak his will into existence. We know God's desire is that all things/all people are reunited in his love in Jesus Christ. We know God wants all people to experience his peace in Jesus that the world cannot give.

Peace is that great Hebrew word *Shalom* – wholeness/fullness/final & satisfying peace w/ justice, fulfillment/delight/flourishing, all things how God intends them to be as they

are supposed to be. Peace that is only found in Jesus...crucified/risen/ruling. **For Christ Himself is our peace...***Eph 2:14* Jesus says we have his authority to live as instruments/bearers/distributors of his Shalom, reconciliation/forgiveness/restoration. **Everywhere** you go, you are an instrument of Christ's peace as an agent of his kingdom. So when you forgive...it's forgiven. When you pray that God would reveal himself in someone's life...when you ask God to comfort sustain someone bring his presence & wisdom into a circumstance...when you rebuke evil...speak wholeness to broken lives...you do so <sup>w/</sup> His authority. When we declare what Christ has promised it happens. Only thing that prevents it is someone who says, "No...I don't want that." God will not force his blessing, grace, favour, salvation on anyone...(Mk 6:5) Jesus was thwarted because of unbelief *"because of their unbelief, he couldn't do any miracles among them"*

I have been convinced for a long time...more so now than ever in fact...that the church talks itself into weakness. We live small. We (individually & communally as church) live out the "Jesus-can't-do-any-miracles-here" mindset. We treat the world as if it is powerful & not fading...authoritative not foolish. We operate from the assumption of defeat, as if no one will pay us any attention...hear & heed our witness...which is why the job description is so awesome: **"The harvest is great, but the workers are few. So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields. Now go, & remember I am sending you out as lambs among wolves. Don't take any money with you, nor a traveller's bag, nor an extra pair of sandals. And don't stop to greet anyone on the road."**

Who would volunteer for that? Shorthanded. High danger. Limited obvious resources. But what happens? The call Jesus issues (& the 72 live into reality) is that all the stuff that should be hazardous to carrying out his mission isn't. All the stuff that ought to cripple their mission...doesn't. Seriously. Lambs among wolves/hostility/rejection... not a problem. No money...no problem. No extra luggage...no problem. No extra shoes...no problem. No fixed itinerary or address...no problem. No reliable menu... no problem. **When** *the seventy-two disciples returned, they joyfully reported, "Lord, even the demons obey us when we use your name!"*

Why is all that no problem? Why given the limitations the church seems to face from the outset...even as Jesus stands there <sup>w/</sup> them...is there a revolution that overthrows satan, routs his demons, & draws people to joy & saving faith...because the real success is already won in Christ: **"But don't rejoice because evil spirits obey you; rejoice because your names are registered in heaven."** **Real** victory is life in Christ that is yours as a gift...you did nothing to earn or deserve. In Christ we are more powerful than we know & more capable than we imagine. In Christ we have more to give, more to offer, more to share than anything else on this earth. In Christ we have the

authority to transform our families, schools, neighbourhoods & city if we simply live that which we have already received. This isn't about moral flawlessness or anything resembling perfection, but about whole-hearted devotion to living the image, authority, peace, presence & power of Jesus who loves you & has made you his own & dwells in you by his Holy Spirit.

The greatest proof of Christianity for others is not how far you can logically analyze your reasons for believing, but how far in practice you will stake your own life on your belief. -- **T. S. Eliot**

The "why" for you/me...Living Water...**go** in his power...Called by God for God's glory... Inviting people into a life of living <sup>w/</sup> Jesus as Jesus directs...Growing in likeness to him & being empowered by the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the grave...obeying his command to love others as he loved us...That's the journey of every follower of Jesus. Overwhelmed by the call, out of place in the world, seemingly under-equipped...but never alone & always empowered by the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead. Every Xn is sent. There are no unsent Xns. Everywhere you go Jesus already is. Everywhere you go, Christ's authority is yours. Everywhere you go, you are an instrument of Christ's peace as an agent of his kingdom. Real victory is life in Christ that is yours as a gift...you did nothing to earn or deserve.

**You** are an instrument of God's peace and an agent of his kingdom!

*As you leave today, be specific & share <sup>w/</sup> your neighbour...*

#### **TAKE IT HOME**

Jesus promises that wherever he sends us, he is going there too.

How does that give you confidence to obey being sent?

Where & to whom do you believe Jesus is sending you this week in his name?

*(Be specific...where do you hear Jesus saying, "Go"?)*

#### **Prayer after the sermon...**

*Lord Jesus, the fields are ready for harvest, but the labourers are few. Open our hearts to see that **WE** are standing in the middle of those fields and you have given us all we need for the harvest. Give us courage to live and boldness to proclaim that your Kingdom is indeed upon us and that peace, restoration, freedom, love and life are offered to all. We ask this in your name. Amen.*