

Christ Episcopal Church

2 Emerson Street

East Norwalk, Connecticut 06855

The Fourth Sunday after Pentecost:

Proper 9 (C)

July 7, 2019

A Sermon by the Rev. Joe Parrish

“Heavenly hope”

DRAFT

The Gospel: Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

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. He 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. Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this house!’ And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. Remain 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. Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you,

eat what is set before you; cure the sick who are there, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, ‘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.’ Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me.” The seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!” He said to them, “I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of

lightning. See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

Give us that heavenly hope to be with you one day, Dear Lord. Amen.

We were not quite like those original seventy-two disciples who were sent without purse or bag in this first missionary effort recorded in the Gospel according to Luke.

However, at the end of the Last Supper after Jesus had become well known and hated by many in the religious hierarchy, Jesus sends the Twelve out a second time in Luke Chapter 22, and that time they are to take money and a purse and Jesus even tells them to sell their cloak in order to have two swords among the Twelve. Times had changed dramatically.

How lightly do we travel? I would not suggest trying to get a sword through the security line at the airport. But the idea of traveling two by two when we are on missionary journeys is good wisdom.

I once years ago participated in an evangelism program called “Here’s Life New York”, and we were assigned to witness our faith in a simple way to people waiting for trains at Grand Central Station, can you believe? My partner was an experienced evangelist who ran a half-way house near Times Square, and even he was reluctant to do this exercise. However, we had each other to lean on, so we set out in Grand Central Terminal to share our faith with others and to invite them to a Bible study at our church, St. Bartholomew’s in Manhattan. We did actually get a Bible study going following that effort that

eventually had over thirty attending from time to time, and five people were sent off to seminary, who are now priests, including myself, and five couples discovered their future spouse in this small group.

God does work miracles, even for the timid!

A few years ago I helped one of our Vestry members who was a member of the local Rotary Club to raise funds to go to Togo, Africa, to give the polio vaccine to children from Togo and fourteen surrounding countries. It was an amazing experience for him. He is not a medical person, but he was interested and willing to

participate in the vaccination program. A college administrator was his partner. They came back with amazing stories about how many children they had inoculated. And they were working in a very crude village which still believed in amulets instead of medicines for curing diseases. Modern medicine was nearly absent, but they went and inoculated children anyway. The health statistics say that if a country has ninety percent of its children inoculated against polio, the virus will be stopped. At the present time only three countries in the world still have polio, Afghanistan, Iraq, and northern Nigeria. Public health officials

there have even been killed for trying to do vaccination because it is seen as “Western influence”. And of course, if there are any countries with polio outbreaks, all surrounding countries, and the world, remain vulnerable to this dread disease. But the Rotary Club persists in raising money to keep up the pressure against polio, to their great credit.

We Christians have raised millions of dollars to purchase mosquito nets for families in Africa to protect them from the deadly malaria mosquito, but millions more are needed. This is an ongoing project of Episcopal Relief and Development which

you will want to support. Millions of lives have been spared by Episcopal Church's efforts against malaria.

Healing is one way we experience the true joy of heaven, before actually visiting it.

A friend of mine sent me a YouTube video of a pastor who says he has visited heaven more than eighty times. I have known my friend who sent me that video clip and his family for over thirty years, I prepared his younger brother for Confirmation at St. James' Church in

Manhattan while I was a seminarian. Both parents are now in heaven, and perhaps he is probably longing to see them again one day. Heaven is sometimes on our mind, isn't it? - especially when we come to church to ponder our eternal destinies.

Today's readings seem to reflect on that feeling of wanting to see heaven, especially the New Testament readings. Paul's letter to the Galatians talks about reaping eternal life from the Spirit of God, a time of harvest for those things we have done on earth. And in Luke's Gospel, Jesus encourages his disciples by telling them to "rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

In the two Old Testament readings today we hear of healing stories and testimonies. The commander of the army of the king of Aram comes to Elisha seeking and finding healing; and the Psalmist rejoices because of having his wailing turned into dancing and putting off his garment of grief and being clothed with joy. It is in these Old Stories of healing that those before Christ found the touch of angel wings and came to know their Creator more securely.

Jesus never ceases to amaze us today as he did two thousand years ago. Jesus still is able through his Spirit to heal, even occasionally raise people from death. Some

call it ‘medical science,’ but one of my wife’s Harvard Business School professors tells it this way—[quote] ‘One day I was walking across the Business School campus, and I died.’ It just so happened that the defibrillator box nearby was unlocked, and it just so happened that someone walked by and took out the defibrillator and shocked his heart back to beating again, and it just so happened that the emergency management unit of the Boston Fire Department was passing by and got the call to turn in at the Business School campus and find this previously dead professor with a faint heartbeat, and immediately got him on

oxygen and injected a dose of something into him and whisked him off to the nearest hospital where they stabilized his weak heartbeat. And a year later this miraculously raised-from-death professor is speaking to some alumni to tell them he was raised from death. And the Business School has him speaking to other alumni now to remind them to remember to be ready for their eventual death, to discuss their assets with their children, and of course, maybe to include the school in their will.

It's all a plot by God to remind people that none of us will be here forever, that we need to get our 'houses' in order, whatever

that means, to be prepared for our end, and so on. But for us here today, we are the ones who have to tell others our story of being raised from the dead, perhaps raised from spiritual death, and have others at least contemplate what is or should be next on their own agenda—maybe thinking of their own demise and how to prepare for it.

Some say that we first need to tell God we are sorry for all sorts of things we have done in the past. I'm not so sure about that formula, or any 'formula', but if it feels right, and you are willing to make the necessary change and seek forgiveness from

others when possible, then do confess your sins to God. God is in fact a very holy Person, so coming into God's presence with some unfinished business may be a bit of a put-off for you, but the Prodigal Son's father didn't wait for his son to say he was sorry, the father simply and immediately embraced his son back into the fold of the family. God does that for us. God embraces anyone who accepts his Son as being bona fide, the real deal, and God makes sure that at our end we are brought to heaven to be eternally with God's only beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

There is really no magical formula for being saved or for being healed. God does it

all. All we must do is to accept God's call for us to come up to be with God's Son Jesus Christ at our last day. It's as simple as that.

Now you may be someone who does not want to admit you haven't been baptized, not to worry, God still loves you. Being baptized is simply a way of witnessing to your community that you are willing to take that very public step of saying you are now a Christian in front of God and all the rest of us. But one of my former Rectors said that even the tears of our eyes can baptize us. And many of us were possibly secretly baptized when we were born, by a nurse or

someone else. So, the public witness is not always the ‘real deal,’ it’s just an important public witness to help remind others of their own frailty before a very holy God.

At my old church over in Elizabeth, New Jersey, I had just finished preparing an entire family, parents, sons, and a grandson for Confirmation for the children and Reception for the parents who had been baptized Roman Catholics. None of the sons or grandson had ever seen a baptism, since they all were baptized as infants and had never attended a church much, if at all, since then. So, I left them after the Confirmation service, not knowing when

they would ever see a baptism, but hoping and praying that they would eventually see a baptism by continuing to go to church. But confirmation actually is a sort of completion of baptism—in the early centuries baptism was all done on adults by a priest or a deacon or a lay person or a bishop, but then when various plagues happened, infants were baptized so their souls wouldn't go to hell. But for those infants, just as for today, we had to invent a further baptismal rite called Confirmation to be sure that everyone who had been baptized knew at least something about the church, its history, its beliefs, its rituals, and so on. Confirmation

is a good thing. But it too is not the 'be all' of Christianity, just the way we of the catholic tradition get some necessary teaching to the believers. And, of course, we also receive those from other catholic traditions into our communion. But all these outward ceremonies are not what is basic. What is basic is to let God help us make that first rung of the ladder to heaven. The cross, that was not really all that effective in keeping Jesus dead, the cross became the way all of us can find our way into heaven led by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Jesus is the Way, the truth, and the life. There is no other. So today hearken to

God's word. Hear, and believe, and spread the Word. Amen.

Description: Evangelism is a way of bringing spiritual healing to others, just as medicine brings physical healing. Both produce positive and measurable results if they are effective. Christ calls to his heavenly realm. We need to accept his call.

Tags: Heal, save, baptize, confirm, Christ, Jesus, God, evangelize, Grand Central, New

York, St. Bartholomew's, St. James',
church, believe, faith, forgiveness,
absolution, wholeness, call, Harvard,
business, school, professor, died,
defibrillator, campus, Togo, Africa, polio,
Bible, priest, married, bishop, mosquito,
nets, Malaria, Episcopal, Relief,
Development, Rotary

The Old Testament Lesson

2 Kings 5:1-14

Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favor with his master, because by him the Lord had given victory to Aram. The man, though a mighty warrior, suffered from leprosy.

Now the Arameans on one of their raids had taken a young girl captive from the land of Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. She

said to her mistress, "If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy." So Naaman went in and told his lord just what the girl from the land of Israel had said. And the king of Aram said, "Go then, and I will send along a letter to the king of Israel."

He went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten sets of garments. He brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, "When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you my servant Naaman, that you may cure him of his leprosy." When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said,

"Am I God, to give death or life, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Just look and see how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me."

But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent a message to the king, "Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come to me, that he may learn that there is a prophet in Israel." So Naaman came with his horses and chariots, and halted at the entrance of Elisha's house. Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored and you shall be clean." But Naaman became

angry and went away, saying, "I thought that for me he would surely come out, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and would wave his hand over the spot, and cure the leprosy! Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them, and be clean?" He turned and went away in a rage. But his servants approached and said to him, "Father, if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, 'Wash, and be clean'?" So he went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan,

according to the word of the man of God;
his flesh was restored like the flesh of a
young boy, and he was clean.

Psalm 30

Exaltabo te, Domine

1. I will exalt you, O Lord,

because you have lifted me up *

and have not let my enemies triumph over
me.

2. O Lord my God, I cried out to you, *

and you restored me to health.

3. You brought me up, O Lord, from the
dead; *

you restored my life as I was going down to
the grave.

4. Sing to the Lord, you servants of his; *
give thanks for the remembrance of his
holiness.

5. For his wrath endures but the twinkling
of an eye, *
his favor for a lifetime.

6. Weeping may spend the night, *

but joy comes in the morning.

7, While I felt secure, I said,

"I shall never be disturbed. *

You, Lord, with your favor, made me as
strong as the mountains."

8. Then you hid your face, *

and I was filled with fear.

9. I cried to you, O Lord; *

I pleaded with the Lord, saying,

10. "What profit is there in my blood, if I go
down to the Pit? *

will the dust praise you or declare your
faithfulness?

11. Hear, O Lord, and have mercy upon me;
*

O Lord, be my helper."

12. You have turned my wailing into
dancing; *

you have put off my sack-cloth and clothed
me with joy.

13. Therefore my heart sings to you without ceasing; *

O Lord my God, I will give you thanks for ever.

The Epistle

Galatians 6:(1-6)7-16

[My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive

themselves. All must test their own work; then that work, rather than their neighbor's work, will become a cause for pride. For all must carry their own loads.

Those who are taught the word must share in all good things with their teacher.]

Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit.

So, let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest-time, if we

do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.

See what large letters I make when I am writing in my own hand! It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that try to compel you to be circumcised--only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. Even the circumcised do not themselves obey the law, but they want you to be circumcised so that they may boast about your flesh. May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been

crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything, but a new creation is everything! As for those who will follow this rule-- peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

The Gospel

Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

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. He 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. Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!' And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. Remain 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. Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; cure the sick who are there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of

God has come near to you.' But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, '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.'

"Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me."

The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!" He said to them, "I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. See, I have given you authority to

tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

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