

**Homily, St. Andrew's
Proper 14C, July 3, 2016
Luke 10:1-11**

Let us pray: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be ever more acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer.

In this season of growth in the Holy Spirit we are focusing on our call to mission. What does it mean to be part of God's mission? What IS God's mission, not just in broad and general terms in the world, but here in NW Calgary, in our communities, now in 2016? Where and how do we see God working in the world around us? What part are we called to play?

Today's Gospel story offers much for us to consider as we deepen our understanding of mission. One commentator identifies 10 principles of mission present in just the first 11 verses, writing: "Jesus' commission to the disciples can serve as a guide for the new models of mission that each generation requires." (NIB, 222) I actually think there are more than 10 if we consider some of the narration before and after Jesus' commission...

The story begins follows directly on the heels of last Sunday's story about three would-be followers of Jesus who fell short of expectations. Three were called to follow and each made some kind of mistake or excuse or delay tactic. Even so, Jesus was not deterred in the least. Today we hear that even after 3 failed calls to discipleship, Jesus continues right along to appoint seventy others. We tend to focus on the 12 named disciples of Jesus but today we hear today of so many more. If we think of this as the first principle of mission, it disavows us of the notion that the mission of the church is something that only a few specially called people - the professionals - carry out. Instead, mission is something to which many are called. These 70 are regular people whose names we don't even know and who are an important part of Jesus' work in the world.

These 70 who Jesus calls are appointed to go on ahead of him, in pairs (it's not a solo venture!), to every town and place, where Jesus intends to go. The mission to which these 70 are appointed is one of preparation. They go ahead of Jesus, preparing the way for those they encounter to see Jesus when Jesus Himself shows up. As a principle for what it means to be in mission, it reminds us that as Jesus' disciples, we are not God. We are followers calling other to follow. We are those who have already heard Jesus' message of life and love and healing, calling others to listen, to see, to know for themselves. Our role is not to convert or to change anyone's heart, rather our role is one of preparation. Jesus is the one who is coming to change people's hearts and to bring in the Kingdom of God. We will see shortly, that we may be called to announce "The kingdom of God has come near to you," but our proclamation itself is not the Kingdom of God... Jesus alone is. This is Good News for us indeed, because it takes all the pressure off to make converts, even as we engage in God's mission.

And now let's turn to the words of Jesus' commission and look for (at least) 10 more principles of mission within it...

Principles of Mission

1. “The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few...” – the world needs the church’s mission; there is more work than people to do it.
2. “Ask the Lord of the harvest” – the need for prayer
3. “Go on your way” – the active participation of each disciple; leaving our comfort zone?
4. “I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves” – believers will face dangers; turn aside anger and danger with innocence, sincerity, vulnerability and non-resistance
5. “Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road” – singularity of purpose; trust; travel light, believing you will have what you need
6. “Say, ‘Peace to this house’ and ‘the kingdom of God has come near to you.’” – Declare the purpose of the mission; what God is doing and bring God’s peace to whomever receives you.
7. “Eat and drink what is provided for you” – the host not the guest sets the context for the disciples’ witness. We don’t dictate the menu or impose our culture on others.
8. “[When] they do not welcome you...” – we will not always succeed. We will experience rejection and resistance.
9. “Shake the dust from your feet” – we must persevere; keep moving on
10. “Know this: the kingdom of God has come near.” – assurance about the fulfillment of God’s redemptive mission

Finally... note that the call is to personal and interactive mission. If we are part of the 70, there are no intermediaries between us and those to whom we are called to go. In terms of what that might mean for us today, one writer asks, for instance: “Can working with and through agencies and institutions substitute for talking with individuals about their response to the Gospel?” (NIB, 221) It means that we can’t just rely on the institution of the church. We have to actually talk to actual people. We can’t assume we know what others think or believe or hope of need. We can’t even assume that amongst ourselves. We have to actually talk to one another... bringing our real selves to the conversation - speaking about our hopes and our fears, our doubts and our convictions... and really listening to others to really hear their hopes and their fears, their doubts and their convictions. It is a difficult call, a challenging principle of mission, and yet one that cannot be avoided if we are to say “yes” to God’s call to mission. This is how we live out the part of our baptismal covenant when we say we strive to “proclaim by word and example

the Good News of God in Christ.” Indeed, “to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom.” is the first Mark of Mission. It is a first and key part of how we live who we are as Christians.

May we, as we prayed near the beginning of our time of worship today, become agents of God’s transforming power and heralds of God’s reign of justice and peace.