



Wednesday Prayer

4th Sunday after Pentecost – Sent ahead in pairs

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. Luke 10:1-3

When serving as assistant to the bishop, I had the privilege of working with seminary students in the candidacy process. One student, when asked for clarity on several points in her endorsement essay, became annoyed and informed the committee, "All of my people will love me and will understand what I'm saying." I think some people believe on some level that ministry is a warm, fuzzy vocation, even though they may not say it out loud.

Being in ministry and preaching the good news of God's love for us SEEMS like something that should be warm, cuddly, and affirming, and that might be true if we were all perfect people of like mind. But if that were the case, God would not have needed to send Jesus in the first place. People continue to respond to laborers/messengers in much the same way they responded to Jesus, "Crucify him!" when confronted with the challenge of living a gospel life.

Confronting sexual exploitation and trafficking is not an easy form of ministry. Those who gain wealth from exploiting others certainly are the wolves that Jesus refers to. We've also encountered those in our churches who don't even want to hear about the ugliness of trafficking and exploitation, and don't want to acknowledge that the gospel challenges us to fight this activity and reach out to those who have been exploited. The hope of this passage comes in the first verse, when we're told that Jesus "sent them on ahead of him in pairs". First of all, we're not intended to do this work alone. When gathered together, we encourage and strengthen each other to carry on the mission of praying, educating and advocating for those caught in sexual exploitation. Most importantly, we need to remember that we're "sent ahead". We can get discouraged when we don't see the immediate results we expect, but we have to remember that our job is to prepare the way for God to do God's work of entering people's hearts and changing people's lives.

So continue to join your efforts with others to the good work of praying, educating and advocating to end sexual exploitation and trafficking. Continue to pray not just for the exploited, but also for yourself and others for strength as you labor. And always trust that God will use your efforts, great and small, to do the true work of the harvest and change people's hearts and minds and lives.

God of the harvest, continue to give us the desire, strength and courage to go out as your laborers and preach the gospel in all that we say and do, but particularly as we pray, teach and advocate for ending sexual exploitation and trafficking. Work through our efforts to bring hope to the hopeless and freedom to those bound by injustice. Amen.

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