

## 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."

Last Sunday in the greeting line after service, I was asked what I was going to do this week..

since I'd already given my Independence Day sermon.

My response was that since Pr. Paul was preaching on the 4<sup>th</sup>,

if I wanted to talk about freedom/independence, I needed to do so a week ahead.

Well, here we are on the 4<sup>th</sup>, and Pr. Paul isn't ready to go, yet.

So, what do I do now?

I was recently given a stack/sermons that were delivered at this church from 1966 to 1967.

I looked up July 1966 and, sure enough, there was a July 3<sup>rd</sup> sermon from Ed Bary.

I figured if anyone could give me a good jumping off point...

for a rousing Independence Day sermon,

Pastor Bary, who was here for at least 150 years, would be the man.

His sermon topic on that day: “Lust”!

According to Pastor Bary, in the 1960’s people were calling Findlay... a midwestern version of “Peyton Place” when it came to sexual immorality.

Man, I really missed out on that one!

Growing up here, I thought we were hopelessly stuck in the 1940’s & 50’s.

Apparently, I wasn’t going to the right parties!

Anyway, Pastor Bary wasn’t any help in my search for topics. I thought of the preacher who delivered his very first sermon to his new congregation, and everybody thought it was a marvelous treatment of tithing and evangelism.

The next week, he gave the exact same sermon, and people thought that was a little strange, but it was a good sermon, so they let it go.

When he gave the exact same sermon for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time, people were furious.

A number of them got together, and knocked on his parsonage door.

“Why have you given us the same sermon 3 times?” they asked.

“You haven’t done what I told you to do, yet!” was his reply.

So, I thought about repeating last Sunday’s sermon, but I didn’t want any committees at my door!

What did I say last week? Should we have a quiz?

What did my sermon ask you to do? Did you do it?

For the record, I suggested...

that we should dedicate ourselves to real freedom this 4<sup>th</sup> of July.

I distinguished b/t independence and freedom.

Independence often entails walking away from those who rule over us, but real freedom requires authority, responsibility, obligation...

b/c these free us from the tyranny of our own bodies, minds, and emotions.

Left to our own devices, we are held captive by our selfish, sinful natures.

This is what Pr. Bary was getting at 44 years ago in his sermon.

The only true freedom in this world is to become obedient to God and servants to all.

To be free, you have to serve...God and God's beloved children.

Well, that covers last week and 44 Independence Day weekends ago, but what is God saying to us today?

First, God is calling us away from the hopelessness and despair... we have fallen into as a nation in the last few years.

What God says to Isaiah in today's Old Testament reading applies to us today:

*Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her, all you who love her; rejoice with her in joy, all you who mourn over her —*

*that you may nurse and be satisfied from her consoling breast;*

*that you may drink deeply with delight from her glorious bosom.*

*For thus says the LORD: I will extend prosperity to her like a river, and the wealth of the nations like an overflowing stream;*

*and you shall nurse and be carried on her arm, and dandled [bounced] on her knees.*

*As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.*

We are those who love Jerusalem b/c we are people of The Book.

Their story is our story; our fate is tied up in theirs.

God tells us in our times of Exodus and Exile, as he told the people of Israel,

“Rejoice and be glad, that I may nurse you, comfort you, and bounce you on my knee like a loving mother.”

My grandfather used to bounce me on his knee as he sang, “Shook, shook, shook rice.

Schultz zen zie fus. Iskenbey rita bey, iskenbey dollar bey.” Or some such thing.

It used to weird me out something fierce.

I used to ask every person I met who spoke German what this meant,

but nobody had any idea.

I finally asked him at the end of his life (he lived to be 100) what he was singing.

It was all low German mixed w/ the fractured English of German farmers.

“Shook, shook, shook rice” is the sound of sleigh bells.

“Schultz zen zie fus” (some guy named Schultz is making a big fuss)

“Iskenbey rita bey, iskenbey dollar bey” (he bought a horse & it wasn’t worth a dollar)

Our being bounced on God’s knee...

is nothing like my experience of being bounced on my grandfather’s knee.

It is the gentle, soothing, comforting actions of a loving mother:

there is no confusion or disorientation or shake-up or shake-down.

God knows that we are lost and frightened and shocked...

by what we have been experiencing as a nation since 9-11.

And God wants to comfort us and nurse us, and return us to joy and peace.

We come here to this place to be comforted, to be fed, to rejoice and be glad.

So, God is calling us away from hopelessness and despair today,

and, in today’s Gospel, God is calling us into mission.

Jesus sends out 70 disciples to heal the sick and proclaim the nearness of the kingdom.

He sends them out in twos: no one is to walk alone.

We heal and proclaim in community; God works through congregated people.

We are sent to gather the harvest: people are waiting for us, desperate to be brought in.

The way will not be easy, and we are to rely totally on God for what we need.

If the message is rejected, we are to simply walk away, but it is essential that we deliver it.

If we do this, we will watch Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning,

we will tread on snakes and scorpions without being harmed,  
we will live in the kingdom now...free from fear, free from  
despair,  
free at last, free at last, Great God almighty, free at last!