

“Bringing Home With Us”

The Rev. Drew Willard
July 3rd, 2016 ©
7th Sun./Pentecost

Galatians 6:1-16

Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

[*Jesus said,*]

4 Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and salute no one on the road.

5 Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace be to this house!’ *Luke 10:4-5*

Let us pray... O God,

In our time, may we re-examine our faith as something that challenges us
to bring out the best in whom we are as individuals and as a people.

As Christians,

may we celebrate the diversity we find in our contact with other cultures and
and grow as Americans.

Amen

We have heard these verses before of Jesus’ odd instructions to his disciples
which hardly seem like wise preparations for a journey.

No money bag, no suitcase, no extra pair of shoes... What was Jesus thinking?

But the clue might be in what he says next: *salute no one on the road...*

So, what could that mean?

What I think it means is that Jesus’ apostles are not to get involved
with those they meet on the road – they are to keep their focus
on the households and estates of the villages they encounter
as they go along.

They are given very specific advice about who they should salute and that is –
the people who live in houses where they hope to stay, saying:

Peace be to this house!

I find the next bit of instruction to be unintentionally humorous:

*7 And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide,
for the laborer deserves his wages;*

do not go from house to house.

What Jesus probably means is:

Get to know those who are hosting you;

And just because you hear Mrs. Goldberg makes the best beef brisket in town,
you stay where you are at the Rabinowitz’ place
even though the brisket... is not so great.

Jesus goes on to say,

*8 Whenever you enter a town and they receive you,
eat what is set before you;*

So, if they are serving you a ham & cheese sandwich,
you take it and like it – even if you are Jewish;

Willard, p.2

Jesus said,

⁹ heal the sick... and say to them,

‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’

This is what the apostles had to offer in return and it is why they have come –
to help people in their need and teach them about
the Beloved Community of God’s Kingdom of Heaven.

Jesus sent his apostles out two by two,

but they were not going ahead to make hotel arrangements for him somewhere.

He sent them out to lay the groundwork for communities of faith
that would form the early Church.

They got practice for what it would take to move the Church
out into the wider world...

That work needs to happen all over again, for a new generation
and even to re-evangelize older generations.

We are living in a time where more and more people are being challenged
to stop taking their religion for granted as a mindless obligation.

More and more people are just giving up on religion,
yet even many of them still consider themselves spiritual.

More and more people are re-examining what they truly believe –
to claim their faith and cling to what works.

More and more people, faced with the same challenges,
are just stubbornly hanging on as a heartless obligation
to beliefs that don’t work.

By now we know that taking a beating won’t teach a foolish person a thing –
but thankfully, taking a beating won’t stop a person who is seeking justice,
either.

I suppose for each of us to figure out which example applies to ourselves,
it depends on who we’re talking to...

We can look to these ancient stories and find encouragement
and even new approaches for the way ahead.

Our lesson from Galatians offers plenty of good advice,
summarized in this way:

*⁹ If you follow your selfish desires, you will harvest destruction,
but if you follow the Spirit, you will harvest eternal life.*

⁹ Don’t get tired of helping others.

You will be rewarded when the time is right, if you don’t give up.

This is basically an enlargement of the Golden Rule –

“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

Willard, p.3

When we ask ourselves “How would I feel if...?”

then you are fulfilling the most basic obligation of courtesy
that applies anywhere in the world.

Then you don't have to know the customs of another country
or even be able to speak the language, to get along.

At that time in my life when I had opportunities to travel overseas,

I made a point to learn other languages –

but I really knew only just enough to break the ice...

“Entschuldigen sie, bitte... Ver moechte...? Vo ist die...?”

“Shem-ma shr-hou wo-men chyu chu?”

I knew enough to be cute I suppose, and that people felt sorry for me in my plight,
because they would start explaining things to me – in English!

What I really mean to say is this:

When I made the effort to try to speak to someone in their language –

meet them where they were at, they appreciated this and wanted to help me.

It is a better approach than some people who go to another country
and expect everyone to speak English.

We Americans appreciate it, too, when someone makes the effort
to speak to us in English, don't we?

Making the effort to take someone seriously for who they are, is important, and
I found that people generally returned the courtesy.

A few days ago, I was going through one of the gates here in The Villages,
there was a young Hispanic man working on the bushes there;

He looked up and I caught his eye and said,

“Buenos dias! Have a nice day!” and he grinned.

It is not a lot to do something like that, but then again, maybe it is...

The other night at the Islamic Center of Orlando for the Iftar –

breaking of the Ramadan fast, it was fun to be immersed in another culture,
along with other Christians, Jews, and Baha'i guests.

I met a young man who was Muslim and studying at
one of the colleges in the Orlando-area.

I told him I was very impressed that someone could leave home
to live in another country where people spoke a different language
and have to cope with school or work and just get around.

He was already very fluent in English – having studied it in India where he was from.

I asked him if he missed his family and he told me that

he called home to his mother & father, twice a day.

Willard, p.4

I didn't realize how much I missed home when I was away, stationed overseas as a soldier in Germany for 3 years, until I went to Israel.

I was traveling on my own to Israel at the end of my military tour and stayed for a week, visiting Jerusalem, Eilat in the Sinai, Nazareth in Galilee, Acre on the coast, and back to Jerusalem.

It was my last day and I wanted to visit the Upper Room where Jesus and his disciples gathered for the Last Supper.

So, I drove out to Mt. Zion which is south of the Old City and walked around the complex of buildings there.

The Chamber of the Holocaust Memorial is there, King David's tomb is there, Hezekiah's Tunnel runs underneath, and somewhere was the Upper Room...

I was wandering around among the buildings, but there were no signs.

Then, I met a European couple and asked them in English if they knew where the Upper Room was?

They told me to go down the steps ahead and turn...

Well, I figured they were trying to help, but really didn't know, since the Upper Room was probably not downstairs.

So, I continued to wander and found myself inside a building, walking down a corridor, with a growing sense of anticipation and wellbeing.

The corridor opened into a larger room about the size of our sanctuary with a set of steps off to the left, and two pillars arching up into the ceiling.

An area like a stage was at the far end of the room, and there were two arched windows on the wall across from me;

There was a small cupola in the corner to my right, and right next to that, was a door that opened to a garden outside.

I sat down on the steps and wondered if I had found the Upper Room... when suddenly two English-speaking couples came in.

Though not addressing me, one person took out a brochure and read, "This is the Upper Room, scene of the Last Supper..."; Then, they went out.

I thought,

"Maybe this is the Upper Room, but they're tourists, too, What do they know..."

Just moments later it seemed, a tour group of about 30 people came in and formed a circle of 12 people around, between the two pillars with their Palestinian tour guide standing in the middle.

Willard, p. 5

The guide said,

“This is the Upper Room, scene of the Last Supper.

It is not the original building,

but was constructed by the Crusaders in the 12th Century...”

Then they sang, “Amazing Grace” and went out...

Almost immediately, a second group came in and – like the first group, they appeared to be Americans... Caucasian Americans, by the way;

And basically the same thing happened...

This large group gathered forming a circle

of 12 people around between the two columns, and the tour guide saying that this was the Upper Room, scene of the Last Supper, adding it was also where the disciples received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost...”

Then he said – in words to this effect,

“Though this is not the original building,

the only thing we can say with certainty is that somewhere on Mt. Zion these events took place...”

Again, there was the singing of “Amazing Grace”,

but this group also sang another hymn.

I was unfamiliar with it, but I imagined they were from a church

and this song was a favorite of their congregation – back home... in America...

I had been away from the States for three years, except for

visits to see my folks and the occasional encounter with American civilians.

All of a sudden, I just felt a wave of homesickness? nostalgia? patriotism?

I was overwhelmed with a feeling of pride and a sense of identity as a white, protestant American.

I may need to qualify that statement to reassure you all

that my view of ‘whiteness’, ‘protestant Christianity’, and ‘Americana’

is not exclusive from... or better than... any other group,

but just in realizing that I was who I was, even on the other side of the world.

I believe those qualities have allowed me to be neutral in some ways

and at the same time, serve as a connector with others

who are different from me.

Perhaps that is due to what I think is the most important quality

we Americans have to offer the word – transcending ethnicity and religion, and that is our sense of humor and optimism.

Willard, p.6

I have read that the Pilgrims who came to these American shores were different
from the grim Puritans and the severe Anglicans,
that they had a sense of joy and an appreciation for the natural world.
Perhaps that was an ingredient for the success they had in coexisting
with their Wampanoag neighbors for 50 years,
before those dour Puritans finally did take over.
The Pilgrims took their 'home' with them on their apostolic adventure,
to continue to be who they were as European Christians
who received their Native allies for who they were.

I believe that is just like what those first apostles had successfully done
bringing not only the Gospel of Jesus Christ,
but they brought it as Good News that was packaged in themselves.
They brought 'home' with them to create a new home
as a community of faith in the family of God...

Amen

*Our lesson today from Galatians 6:1-16 encourages charitable action –
that it makes sense to be kind to all people...*

[The Apostle Paul said,]

^{6:1}My friends, you are spiritual.

So if someone is trapped in sin, you should gently lead that person
back to the right path.

But watch out, and don't be tempted yourself.

²You obey the law of Christ when you offer each other
a helping hand.

³If you think you are better than others,
when you really aren't, you are wrong.

⁴Do your own work well, and then you will have something to be proud of.
But don't compare yourself with others.

⁵We each must carry our own load.

⁶Share every good thing you have
with anyone who teaches you what God has said.

⁷You cannot fool God, so don't make a fool of yourself!
You will harvest what you plant.

⁸If you follow your selfish desires, you will harvest destruction,
but if you follow the Spirit, you will harvest eternal life.

⁹Don't get tired of helping others.

You will be rewarded when the time is right, if you don't give up.

¹⁰We should help people whenever we can, especially if they are followers of the Lord.

¹¹You can see what big letters I make when I write with my own hand.

¹²Those people who are telling you to get circumcised
are only trying to show how important they are.

And they don't want to get into trouble
for preaching about the cross of Christ.

¹³They are circumcised, but they don't obey the Law of Moses.
All they want is to brag about having you circumcised.

¹⁴But I will never brag about anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.
Because of his cross, the world is dead as far as I am concerned,

and I am dead as far as the world is concerned.

¹⁵It doesn't matter if you are circumcised or not.

All that matters is that you are a new person.

¹⁶If you follow this rule, you will belong to God's true people.

God will treat you with undeserved kindness and will bless you with peace.

Let us be challenged and guided by these words...

Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

- ¹After this the Lord appointed seventy two others,
and sent them on ahead of him, two by two,
into every town and place where he himself was about to come.
- ²And he said to them,
“The harvest is plentiful,
but the laborers are few;
pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers
into his harvest.
- ³Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.
- ⁴Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals;
and salute no one on the road.
- ⁵Whatever house you enter, first say,
‘Peace be to this house!’
- ⁶And if a son of peace is there, your peace shall rest upon him;
but if not, it shall return to you.
- ⁷And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide,
for the laborer deserves his wages; do not go from house to house.
- ⁸Whenever you enter a town and they receive you,
eat what is set before you;
- ⁹heal the sick in it and say to them,
‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’
- ¹⁰But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you,
go into its streets and say,
- ¹¹‘Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off against you;
nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near.’
- ¹⁶ “[The one] who hears you hears me, and [the one] who rejects you rejects me,
and [the one] who rejects me rejects [the one] who sent me.”
- ¹⁷The seventy two returned with joy, saying,
“Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!”
- ¹⁸And he said to them,
“I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.
- ¹⁹Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions,
and over all the power of the enemy;
and nothing shall hurt you.
- ²⁰Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you;
but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”