

Sunday, June 18, 2017

Genesis 18:1-15

Romans 5:1-8

Matthew 9:35 -10:8

Disciplined Disciples

What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus? When Jesus called the 12 they had no specific questions about their tasks nor what Jesus was going to do. They knew he was kind, good and caring. He was different than others—but he seemed to have a different purpose in his life than they did. So most of them just literally dropped what they were doing when Jesus said, “Come. Follow me.” They followed this man who offered to them something different- a life of travelling and teaching. But did they know that their lives would be changed forever because they would be spending time with the Son of God? Or did they follow because of curiosity, adventure and an opportunity to do something different, helping others find God.

There's a wonderful story about Saint Francis, a 13th century monk, who one day informed his brothers that he planned to go into the nearby village on a preaching mission. He invited a novice to go along. On their way, they passed an injured man and Francis promptly stopped, saw to the poor fellow's needs and arranged medical care for him. They went on and soon passed a homeless man who was near starvation. Again, Francis stopped his journey and ministered to the hungry, homeless man. So it went, through the day: people in need, Francis lovingly caring for them as best he could until the sun was low in the sky. He told his novice friend it was time for them to return, now, to the monastery for evening prayers. But the young man said, "Father, you said we were coming to town to preach to the people." Francis smiled. Then he said, "My friend, that's what we've been doing all day."

This is evangelism whereby one ministers to people in their need. It is not worrying about numerical growth, adding to conversion records, or winning acclaim within the denomination. Evangelism is sharing the love of God in concrete form among God's people. And it is an essential function of the disciples of Jesus from the beginning and for those who believe and live following his teachings today.

“Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.” These were the words of the first call to serve Jesus. Those first disciples followed Jesus and they watched him heal many people. They watched him raise a young girl to life, heal a woman who had been hemorrhaging for 12 years and enable a blind man to see and a mute to speak.

Our reading from Matthew 9-10 summarizes Jesus early days of ministry. He went through all the towns and villages. He taught in their synagogues, preached the good news of

the kingdom and healed disease and sickness. Then it states, "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he told his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field."

Jesus did not look at the crowds of people and say- there are too many people who need my help. It's too much work! No he asked God for more workers who would do what he had been doing so that he could reach more people. He prayed to God knowing that it was time to have those who had been with him to do the work as well.

Today when we speak of doing the Lord's work or discovering our mission as a church family it means doing things which enable us to reach out to others in Christ's name. So just think back over these last months as to where we have reached out and offered our support, our tangible gifts and our time.

The boxes in the narthex are examples of what we use to share the message of love with others—food for the Downtown Mission, toiletries for Hiatus House (women's shelter), canned goods and bus tickets for the Windsor Youth Centre, soup labels are collected to be reimbursed for school supplies locally, used stamps are sold to collectors and the money used to buy Bibles for distribution. Yet we also know that our Communi-tree with its specific gifts goes beyond these walls as well—Save African Child Uganda, socks, mitts, toques for those in need at the Downtown Mission and Youth Centre, money to support the Breakfast Program at Roseville Public School. And at Christmas, the baskets of gifts go and support families to celebrate Jesus' birth and fruit baskets for those who are unable to go out in the community as they once did. We have also supported the Sunparlour Pregnancy Centre and Hiatus House too.

You as Glenwood Church are on a mission—to help others and you do so sharing Christ's mission of love- because there are many who need to know they are loved and cared for. You have the compassion that Jesus spoke about—and so we continue to evangelize not only those in our community, but around the world. You are disciplined disciples and for some of us, we may not even know why!

Jesus spoke to his disciples and sent them out with instructions. "Don't go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go to the lost sheep of Israel. - He wanted the disciples to be safe and told them to stay within their faith communities—the Jews; Serving amongst the Gentiles and Samaritans might have brought them harm or threats.

He said, "Preach this message: The kingdom of heaven is near." People believed that because there was so much evil in the world then that the world would soon end. So he asked the disciples to preach about God's heavenly kingdom—the place of eternal rest.

He then told them—heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those with leprosy (diseased), and drive out demons.

At that time it was believed that when a person was sick, diseased or in need of healing—a part of the body that needed to be repaired, it was because the person had a demon. By having the demons removed they would be made well physically.

We should also note that Jesus did not say anything about preaching or saving souls. He wanted the disciples to show compassion as they saw the people in need. He gave them further instructions as well—take no money, no bag with a change of clothes or shoes and to trust God to look after you and all your needs.

The disciples did as Jesus asked and they shared Jesus' message of love with those whom they met. It was not an easy mission then nor is it easy today.

Jesus told the disciples to stay amongst their own faith group as they shared the kingdom of heaven. Today we can easily say that there are many who have not heard Christ's message and the need is greater as many have not heard or choose not to listen. Jesus wants us to share and show compassion and meet the needs of the people first—then share the message of hope and the gift of eternal life. We may not have the sense that the world is coming to an end but the kingdom of God will come for each person who believes.

Jesus reminds the disciples and us as well that it won't be so easy carrying out his mission but we are not alone in doing it. We have each other as brothers and sisters in Jesus. We have each other as members and adherents of Glenwood United Church. We have each other because we believe in God—Father, Son and Spirit. And we believe that Jesus is our Saviour and lord who calls us to tell the message of love and hope.

The message we share is urgent! Don't dawdle, there are people waiting who need to know that they are loved and that through this love we help others where they are and what they need. Jesus said, "Freely you have received God's gift of love. Now, freely give."

SING "FREELY, FREELY" 447.

