

July 6, 2025 – Online

Luke 10: 1-10 -- The Mission of the Seventy

2 Kings 5: 1-14 -- The Healing of Naaman

Pre-service music

Called by Christ to be disciples — StF 660

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_5fI0N6umzc

Jesus calls us — StF 250

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yuIQuvsFD00>

Lord, you call us to your service — StF 664-

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MtsubiBA78s>

Lord, you have come to the seashore — StF 558

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nGpM9m3hNSo>

==ORDER OF SERVICE==

Call to worship -- WW93

GMT20250619-132555 — start at .03 to 1.28

Be still for the presence of the Lord – StF 20

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XOCfPjLOvC4>

Prayer – WW20

Luke 10:1-10

Reflection — being called and saying ‘yes’

GMT20250619-132555 — 1.490 to 12.08

12.20 to 12.34

Lord, you have come to the seashore — StF 558

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PXHc_R7ZCGs

2 Kings 5

Meditation

GMT20250619-132555 — 12.44-35.25

Lord, you call us to your service — StF 250

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MtsubiBA78s>

Prayers

Intercessions

Lord’s Prayer

Benediction

GMT20250619-132555 — 35.30-43.30

Have you heard God’s voice? StF 662

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JzJr9T5JYRU>

Luke 10: 1-10

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 labourers are few;
therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers 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 labourer 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."

This reading starts with a wide invitation for one and all to join in the Kingdom work!
And apparently Jesus already had 70 people on board to go out
And spread the Good News!
That's a good size congregation!
And we often think of what we could do with such a congregation these days...
But as we know, not all 70 are going to really stick to the work...
And Jesus is quick to remind them it's not going to be easy work...
They'll be going like 'lambs in the midst of wolves'
Which I remember as the scripture passage
used by the person who was doing our training for missionary service in India.
It's always a challenge to invite folks to take on something important
And to let them know it won't be easy —
In fact, if it was easy, then we probably wouldn't need to be recruiting!
But to also let them know that they won't be on their own.
In this passage, Jesus sends them off in pairs...
And in recent weeks, we've been hearing about God sending the Holy Spirit
To accompany us on the difficult journeys and with the difficult tasks.
And sometimes, it's the most difficult tasks that bring the most success!
[Me on Sudoku — Easy puzzles — never ranked above 30th place...
Me on Medium — ranked in the top 20
Me on Hard — ranked in the teens
And then I tried the Extreme level —
and got 6th place on my first try and 4th on the second.
That just tells me that folks are afraid of trying something challenging!]

We all would like to think that if God called us to do something,
We're up for the challenge — we'd quickly say 'yes' —
But that's NOT how it usually happens!
Instead, we seem to think it's a great invitation for everyone else,
But it's not really convenient for me at the moment...
I've worked with Nominations Committees for many years now,
And I know that it often will take asking at least 4 or 5 people saying 'NO'
Before someone will say 'yes' to an invitation to take on a role in the church.
Sometimes it takes asking dozens of people —
And sometimes there is no one who will say 'yes.'
Everyone has 'good reasons' — and yet the positions need to be filled...
Still God calls...

I remember one of my Old Testament professors remarking
That the human tendency was first and foremost to make excuses —
And he pointed out the Bible is full of those who thought God had the wrong person:
From Abraham and Moses to Jeremiah and Isaiah and nearly all the OT prophets...
In the New Testament, we do have those seemingly miraculous responses
from the disciples who heard Jesus' call and 'dropped everything'...
But we also have the stories of Saul who had to be blinded on the road to Damascus
Before he could 'see the light'...
And the other disciples whom Jesus called and made lots of excuses...
Jesus even tells a parable about how the host of a great banquet calls for guests
Who all seem to have other previous engagements...

"I cannot come to the banquet" was a favourite song for my siblings and me
When we were growing up:
"I cannot come... I cannot come to the banquet; don't trouble me now.
I have married a wife; I have bought me a cow.
I have fields and commitments that cost a pretty sum;
Pray hold me excused; I cannot come."
[Of course, my siblings and I would change the words around:
"I have bought me a wife; I have married a cow..."]

That OT professor thought maybe some of our reluctance
Was about wanting God's flattery —
We want to hear how indispensable we would be with our great talents...
I wonder if God, gets weary of asking the ones to whom he has given the gifts
But are so reluctant to respond,
to share what they've been given...
Still God calls...

Of course, some of us are tempted to take on too much —
Which is also probably about wanting to feed our own ego—
To show how important our contributions are...
And so we must do some careful discernment to hear
What's from God and what's from our own ego — or from other sources...
[Another discussion for another day?]

I wonder when you last did something that was far out of your comfort zone —

And what kind of obstacles you needed to overcome in yourself
In order to say 'yes.'

Going out from our comfort zones is an essential part of participating in God's mission

Going to where God needs us to be

In order to see where God is at work

And how God needs us to be part of that work

Today's text about not carrying extra clothes or baggage could sound freeing –

God will provide!

On the other hand, it also means giving up our protective shields...

Entering into the lifestyle of the other

Even eating 'whatever they provide'... what if we don't like it?

When God sends us out, we're not to be dictating our own agenda

Imposing our own cultural standards

We're to be on the lookout for how God is already at work around us

And inviting us to be part of that adventure...

[Lord, you call us to your service]

As I was sharing earlier, sometimes when we hear God's word telling us to go out

And tell others – about who God is, about what God does –

We think, "Well, I'll leave that for the others.

The ones who can speak to strangers.

The ones who know what they're talking about.

The ones with power to get other people to listen to them.

I'm not that kind of person.

I'm quiet...

or I don't have any power that would make people listen to me."

In the story we're to hear in a few moments, there are seven characters:

Naaman (army commander)

Naaman's wife

Naaman's wife's slave girl

King of Aram

King of Israel

Elisha

Other servants

Rank them in order of power:

King of Israel

King of Aram

Elisha

Naaman (army commander)

Naaman's wife

Other servants

Naaman's wife's slave girl

Now listen to the story and decide who has the most insight:

2 Kings 5: 1-14

Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favour with his master, because by him the LORD had given victory to Aram. The man, though a mighty warrior, suffered from leprosy. Now the Arameans, on one of their raids, had taken a young girl captive from the land of Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. She said to her mistress, 'If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy.'

So Naaman went in and told his lord just what the girl from the land of Israel had said. And the king of Aram said, 'Go then, and I will send along a letter to the king of Israel.' He went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten sets of garments. He brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, 'When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you my servant Naaman, that you may cure him of his leprosy.'

When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, 'Am I God, to give death or life, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Just look and see how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me.'

But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent a message to the king, 'Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come to me, that he may learn that there is a prophet in Israel.' So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and halted at the entrance of Elisha's house.

Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, 'Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored and you shall be clean.' But Naaman became angry and went away, saying, 'I thought that for me he would surely come out, and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and would wave his hand over the spot, and cure the leprosy! Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them, and be clean?' He turned and went away in a rage. But his servants approached and said to him, 'Father, if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, "Wash, and be clean"?' So he went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean.

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Who is the teacher here?
Who has power here?
What kind of power does each have?
Who has insight?

Many of us will have heard this story before –
And probably sermons about how we need to be open
To God asking us to do things which seem a bit silly or simplistic
Beneath our dignity!
I spoke earlier about how sometimes God asks us to do very difficult things!
But this passage also reminds us
that sometimes God works with simple things that bring us down to earth.

Taken with the Gospel reading this morning,
We are confronted with a realization
That God's truth, God's healing, might come
Through people and paths we have overlooked...
The wisdom of the simple sometimes exceeds the wisdom of the powerful!

Sometimes the wisdom of the simple is that they don't realise they don't have power –
They just use whatever power they have!
And the power they have is a *confidence in what they have experienced*.

The slave girl had obviously seen – or at least heard – of people being healed
By “the prophet who is in Samaria.”
She doesn't seem to remember his name,
But she remembers where he is – in Samaria, which would have been enemy territory!
And she remembers that he had healed people.

If we were ranking our list of people today by courage, by bravery,
I think the slave girl would come at the top!
She's a girl! And a slave girl at that – the lowliest of the low –
Probably good for cleaning and cooking and making babies,
According to the army generals and kings and soldiers...
Since she's a slave, a 'captive from Israel', she's probably been through a war
And taken from her family, her home by force –
Forced into a new environment, a new set of tasks, responsibilities –
Probably facing what we would call 'abuse' –
And yet she speaks out with love and concern – and courage! –
In response to the suffering of another – her new master.

I wonder if any of us would have had the courage to speak out that way.
I wonder what any of us consider what we have to offer
To those who are suffering in our world today.
We're often hesitant to invite people to church on Sunday –
Because they might find it (or us) boring...
A recent survey of the thousands of young people
who attended last year's 3 Generate Methodist youth gathering
showed that virtually none of them had ever invited a friend to go to church —
or even a church event — with them.

They had grown up in a culture where faith is considered a private matter —
Or that everyone already has their own faith,
So they're careful not to be seen to impose their own.
The part about respecting other faiths is a fairly new concept,
But it grows out of a generations-old reluctance to speak about faith publicly.

I was last preaching on this set of lectionary readings before the pandemic...
At that point, I was wondering why we might (or might not) invite
Others to join us for worship...
Whether we might even consider that regular worship is part of our own 'healing':
Is it 'too easy' to overlook the discipline of regularly meeting with others
To consider our lives from God's point of view
As we hear scripture and pray together —
To recognise the support that comes from being with others
Who are also trying to follow God in their lives...
Is it 'too hard' to commit to showing up, even when we don't really feel like it?
Is it 'too hard' to show up when we suspect someone else will be there...
Someone who we might have had a disagreement with recently?
Someone who might need our forgiveness?
Someone we might need to forgive?

What if we stopped to realise how much each of us grows and heals
In love and courage and insight
As we make a time and place to worship week after week after week?
Might we then look around us at the others
Who are lonely and disconnected
Who are struggling with inner demons
And outer threats...
Might we consider offering them a very important source of healing?
to join in our worship and fellowship wherever it might take place?

Some time ago I overheard a conversation amongst church members
About someone who had been on the fringes of one of our congregations
But then got attracted to another, more questionable set of relationships...
The gist of the conversation was that the 'someone' really wouldn't fit in here anymore.
That remark was made with some sadness,
But also with a kind of self-protection:
"That kind really doesn't fit with us."

From what I've heard of Jesus, that wasn't his consideration.
Jesus didn't come for the proper folk —
Being part of the Church is not about getting into a 'proper' social set!
Being Church is about including those who need healing —
And being willing to be part of that healing process.

Very difficult business.
But effective business, especially when practiced for a long time...

I've been at Conference this week —
And one thing that always impresses me

Is how many really special people there are in our churches across the land –
And across the world!
When I encounter other Methodists — and indeed, Christians of other denominations,
I know I will meet folk who are good—
Not of their own doing,
But because they have been willing to set aside their power
And seek the mutual healing – of themselves and others
Gathered, week after week,
To hear God's Word,
To share with others how they're struggling
To remind each other of God's love
To forgive each other when they've been offended
To keep reminding each other of who else needs help...

Gathering with others for worship or Bible Study or prayer groups
is a bit like Elisha's prescription for Naaman:
"Go and wash in the Jordan seven times"...
Which sounded rather foolish.

"Get up and go to worship and fellowship every week – at least once"

It's easy to think, "That's too simplistic –
If God's going to cure me (or my neighbor)
Of greed or lust or anxiety or ...
Then I need someone to come and make a loud proclamation
And wave a hand over me and cure me!"

But God tends to work more effectively through the quiet, common patterns
That we scorn perhaps because we want the drama...
The lights, the cameras, the action...

Who do you know that needs healing?
Might you dare to invite them to be part of a healing congregation?
What keeps you from doing that?

Have you got the faith, the insight of a small slave girl?
Whatever power she had, she used....
What powers has God given you —
To take action on important political issues,
To look after the environment
To create safe spaces inside and outside the Church,
Where people don't judge, but listen and offer support
To get to know and learn about more people in our local communities
So that we build relationships,
Break down barriers,
And stop prejudice."

God still calls: I wonder how you will respond.

The slave girl found her voice, so must we.