

Sermon by Rev David Thiem

Pentecost 7 – Wesley 9am & 10.30am services – 3rd July 2016

Theme: 'The joy of being delegated by Jesus'

Reading: Luke 10:1-10 & 16-20

Introduction

It's said that the test of a good leader is delegation, or at least that is one aspect of a good leader. A good leader knows how and when to engage the talents of others in appropriate ways. A poor leader is so insecure, or possibly so arrogant, that the leader tries to do all the work on her or his own, micromanaging, attempting too much and accomplishing too little, robbing others of the joy of using their talents in leadership. If this is a good principle of leadership, and I think it is, then I know there are occasions when I have failed as I have attempted to control outcomes that suit me or suit what I think is best rather than allowing others to forge ahead with their ideas and enthusiasm. Confession time! Sometimes we clergy do things by ourselves because it is easier to manage, or we think it will work out better if we do it ourselves rather than having to work with others. We fail to read this passage properly that sees Jesus equipping and delegating so that the mission of God's church is broadened.

Today's Gospel depicts Jesus as a great leader, delegating to his expanded group of disciples, sometimes said as seventy, in other translations as seventy two, the right to minister in his name and sends them out.

The one who has called people to himself and his teaching now sends people forth, thrusting them out in mission. These travelling evangelists and missionaries will spread throughout the land, two by two, speaking and healing in the name of Jesus. Jesus delegates to others and so expands the effectiveness of his ministry. Here we have a challenge for not only the clergy, but also to all who call themselves disciples and followers of Jesus. There is a small rhetorical question: 'How do we share our faith?' Worth pondering that thought for just a moment, not to feel guilty or insecure, but rather to think about this aspect of our faith.

"How do we share our faith?"

The passage – Luke 10: 1-11 & 16-20

The other thing I love about Jesus' leadership style was that he wasn't afraid to say, 'Hey this is no walk in the park – this will be difficult, sharing your faith with others.' Obviously they are my words translated from what Jesus actually says:

"Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves." Vs 3

Those being sent knew they wouldn't be welcomed everywhere and Jesus simply said to them:

"But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into the streets and say, 'Even the dust of your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God is near.' Vss 10/11

Not often that we are told living the Gospel today will have its difficulties in ethics, in priorities in life, in relationships and generally fitting in to a very worldly society. However, these are the facts and we have to work through what our faith actually means and the challenges that it may throw up.

I remember vividly a mature young adult who became a Christian being quite surprised by the demands he saw that his new found faith put on him. Suddenly he had a conscience and a concept of right from wrong that had never been there before. Suddenly he saw he was called to be faithful in his marriage relationship and honest in his business dealing where previously he had been 'shonky' and was known for this. In his witness to his new found faith in God suddenly people noticed that he was a different person and he wasn't used to this change (and I suspect those who knew him before were somewhat amazed by this change). I'm sure he was one of those mentioned in this passage by the returning disciples as the seventy two returned with joy and said: 'Lord even the demons submit to us in your name.' vs 17

The change in people was visible and should be visible with the way they live their lives in Christ. People can and do change and we can celebrate that in God's name.

True story

The rapid, dramatic expansion of Christianity in Asia and Africa is well known. In 1900 at least 75% of all Christians were of Caucasian background from Europe, North America and Russia. By 2000, around 60% of all Christians lived outside those traditional 'Christian' areas. Christians in Africa, Asia and Latin America increased 1300% in 100 years to over 1.2 billion people. China continues that dramatic increase today.

A key factor in this Christian growth is that while the numbers of Christian missionaries sent from western countries has shrunk, missionaries from third world countries are increasingly astonishing. There are today around 50,000 third world missionaries at work in countries other than their native lands.

Ronald J. Sider 'One-sided Christianity? Uniting the Church to heal a lost and broken world.'

What can we learn from this passage?

A number of years ago, James Macgregor Burns wrote a book simply titled 'Leadership'. (New York: Harper Colophon, 1978)

In this book he contrasted two types of leaders: the 'transactional leader' and the 'transformative leader'.

The transactional leader discerns the needs of followers, performs leadership as a set of expectations to be met, a series of jobs to be done. Leadership is thus a transaction between the expectations of the followers and the meeting of those expectations by the leader.

Transformative leadership seeks more than merely managing the felt needs of the followers. The transformative leader elevates followers to a higher level, refusing to be either trapped or driven by the conventional expectations of followers, calling followers to a larger purpose, a higher moral commitment, thus transforming the

organization and its members. Social progress requires that there be a leader who is willing to risk the disapproval and even rejection in the interest of transformation. In a Christian context, I would say that being a transformative leader means believing that God is always making all things new, even us, and that conversion, change, and transformation are typical, expected gifts of this faith.

Jesus was a transformative leader, taking risks with his disciples, empowering his wider group of disciples to take up the mantle of ministering to others and sacrificing himself for God's cause.

Transformative leadership is risky, comes at a cost, takes chances on people (which sometimes ends in disaster) but also can produce amazing results.

This passage teaches us to look at transformative leadership, see the implications and to move forward in faith, even though it may cost us. For too long the western church has been led by transactional leadership which is safe, rather than trusting transformative leadership which is risky, relies on others but offers the hope and joy reflected in the Gospel for today.

Let us pray

Lord, you taught us to pray 'thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven'. We believe that you are Lord, that you are indeed bringing in the kingdom and working for the accomplishment of your will right here on earth. But then you turn toward ordinary, sometimes not too gifted people like us and call us to do your work. Rather than turn the world upside down by yourself, you enlist us to do it with you. You send us forth on outrageously ambitious assignments to be your people in the world. Lord we hope you know what you are doing!! We, who have faith in you, are stunned by how much faith you have in us. So Lord, now that you have given each of us assignments, we are bold to pray that you would give us what we need to be your faithful disciples. Go ahead of us and push us into places where you yourself are about to go. Send us forth to do the work of your kingdom, even in our weaknesses and inadequacy, confident that you will give us what we need to do for the work you have assigned. Give us eyes to see your kingdom coming near to the world through us. Amen.