

## Simple Power

July 3, 2016

### Luke 10: 1-11 and 16-20

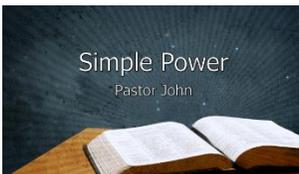
*After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. <sup>2</sup> He said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. <sup>3</sup> Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. <sup>4</sup> Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. <sup>5</sup> Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!' <sup>6</sup> And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. <sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; <sup>9</sup> cure the sick who are there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' <sup>10</sup> But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, <sup>11</sup> '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.' ... <sup>16</sup> "Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me." <sup>17</sup> The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!" <sup>18</sup> He said to them, "I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. <sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."*



Independence Day is tomorrow. It is a day when we remember who we are as a people and who we are as a country. It is also a day when we remember all that is good that America stands for. It is a day of cookouts, parades, and celebrations. It is a day of remembrance as well.

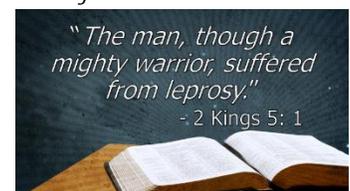


As we enter into July, we begin a sermon series that is based on the “simple” things of our faith: the simple power found in our faith, the simple witness in sharing our faith, the simple choices that keep us rooted in our faith, the simple practices of our faith that keep us connected to God, and how our faith allows us to have simple needs. It is my hope and prayer that as we journey together through this “Simple” series this July that all of our faiths will be deepened and enriched.



In today’s gospel lesson, Jesus is preparing His followers to continue His ministry after He departs this earth. He knows that soon enough God will take Him to the cross and grave. He knows that soon enough the disciples and followers will be left alone and Jesus wants them to be ready to carry on the mission. Jesus explains the situation and then sends them out ahead of Him with a word of encouragement. In verses 2 and 3 we read, “*The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.*”<sup>3</sup> *Go on your way.*” Jesus, the Lord of the harvest, is sending out the workers to heal the sick and to proclaim that the kingdom of God is near. Jesus empowers them to do the things He has done. He is teaching them that the power of Christ already resides in them. When they return, joyful over all that they have been able to accomplish as they went two by two, Jesus says, “*I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning.*” What a powerful statement. The seventy-two were able to do amazing things as they went from town to town in the name of Jesus. As the passage closes, Jesus reminds them that their joy should not come from defeating the enemy, but from knowing that “*your names are written in heaven.*” What a powerful experience for the seventy-two that went out into the communities! And what a powerful experience for those who encountered them as well.

In this week’s Old Testament lesson from 2 Kings 5 we find the story of Naaman. Naaman is a powerful and important commander in the army of Aram. In one of their past conquests over Israel, Aram took some prisoners of war and a young, Israelite slave girl resides in Naaman’s house as his wife’s servant. But



Naaman, you may remember, had a problem: *“The man, though a mighty warrior, suffered from leprosy.”* Although he was a powerful and mighty warrior, he could not remove his leprosy. So this young slave girl steps out in faith. Much like the seventy-two who were sent out by Jesus to spread the kingdom of God, this young girl steps out in belief and says, *“If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy.”* That is a pretty bold statement. But for some reason Naaman finds her believable. He is moved to go to the King of Aram to seek permission to go and see this prophet. The king writes a letter to the king of Israel and Naaman heads off, with letter and a great treasure in hand, to find this prophet. The king of Israel reacts as most of us would react. The king tears his clothes and, reading from verse 7, says, *“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 Elisha catches wind of what is going on and basically says, “Relax, send him my way”. Elisha is a man who knows the simple power of God that resides with him. So Naaman goes to Elisha’s house to be cured of his leprosy.

Now picture the scene. Naaman and his entourage and horses and chariots and all his treasure parade up to Elisha’s house. Naaman and company must have had some pretty high expectations. Surely Elisha will come out and say powerful words and wave his arms and do something amazing and the leprosy will be gone. But instead Elisha sends out a messenger and tells Naaman to go wash in the Jordan seven times. Can you imagine Naaman’s reaction? Hear the word: *“He turned and went away in a rage.”* Naaman expected exactly what we would expect. He reacted how we would probably react. But his servants calmed him down and convinced him to do just the simple thing that Elisha requested. Naaman stepped into the Jordan. *“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.”* Just as the seventy-two went out in simple faith and healed and preached in the name of Christ, Naaman too experienced the simple power of God.





So what does the story of the seventy-two and the story of Naaman have to do with Winner United Methodist Church and with us as followers of Jesus Christ? Taken together they point us to our task as Disciples of Christ and show us a way to accomplish the mission that Christ calls us to as the people of God.

The seventy-two went out into the world fully trusting in God to lead, guide, and provide. Jesus instructed them not to take anything with them but to rely on those who welcomed them in the name of peace. He did not want them to force themselves upon anyone. If people or a town did not welcome them, they were to simply shake the dust off of their sandals and head on to the next opportunity. We too are called upon to go forth into the world in the name of the Prince of Peace.

The slave girl and Naaman fully trusted in God to bring healing. She spoke and he went forth in the belief that God could and would heal. Naaman somehow caught onto her faith and boldly went forth. The simple power that she knew resided in God allowed a pagan and powerful commander to experience God's power in his own life. We too are called to trust in the simple power of God to bring healing to our broken lives and to a broken world. Like the 72, we too have a role to play.

I am new to this community and to this church. But it is my sincere hope and humble prayer that together we can fully trust in the simple power found in our faith in God. May we as a community of faith latch onto the simple power of God and allow it to work in our lives and in this place. As the simple power of God infuses our lives, may it allow us to grow in our own faith, coming to be more and more like Jesus Christ. And as the simple power comes to dwell in us, may we allow it to lead us all to go forth like the seventy-two, bringing the kingdom of God near to those we come to love and serve.

Jesus' words to the seventy-two ring true for us as well: "*The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.*" In our own hearts, may we welcome in the Lord of the harvest, drawing ever nearer to Jesus as we each grow in our faith. And may our faith lead us forth, carrying the light and love of Christ out into the world, allowing others to feel the kingdom of God drawing near as we love and serve the world in need. Amen.