

Sixth Sunday After Pentecost, Year C

July 4, 2010

Isaiah 66: 10-19; Psalm 66: 1-9; Galatians 6: 1-16; Luke 10: 1-11, 16-20

Isaiah 66:10-14

{10} Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her, all you who love her; rejoice with her in joy, all you who mourn over her-- *{11}* that you may nurse and be satisfied from her consoling breast; that you may drink deeply with delight from her glorious bosom. *{12}* For thus says the LORD: I will extend prosperity to her like a river, and the wealth of the nations like an overflowing stream; and you shall nurse and be carried on her arm, and dandled on her knees. *{13}* As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem. *{14}* You shall see, and your heart shall rejoice; your bodies shall flourish like the grass; and it shall be known that the hand of the LORD is with his servants, and his indignation is against his enemies.

Psalm 66:1-9

{1} Make a joyful noise to God, all the earth; *{2}* sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise. *{3}* Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! Because of your great power, your enemies cringe before you. *{4}* All the earth worships you; they sing praises to you, sing praises to your name." Selah *{5}* Come and see what God has done: he is awesome in his deeds among mortals. *{6}* He turned the sea into dry land; they passed through the river on foot. There we rejoiced in him, *{7}* who rules by his might forever, whose eyes keep watch on the nations-- let the rebellious not exalt themselves. Selah *{8}* Bless our God, O peoples, let the sound of his praise be heard, *{9}* who has kept us among the living, and has not let our feet slip.

Galatians 6:[1-6] 7-16

{1} My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted. *{2}* Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. *{3}* For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves. *{4}* All must test their own work; then that work, rather than their neighbor's work, will become a cause for pride. *{5}* For all must carry their own loads. *{6}* Those who are taught the word must share in all good things with their teacher.] *{7}* Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. *{8}* If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit. *{9}* So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest-time, if we do not give up. *{10}* So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith. *{11}* See what large letters I make when I am writing in my own hand! *{12}* It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that try to compel you to be circumcised--only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. *{13}* Even the circumcised do not themselves obey the law, but they want you to be circumcised so that they may boast about your flesh. *{14}* May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. *{15}* For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything! *{16}* As for those who will follow this rule-- peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

{1} 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. *{2}* 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. *{3}* Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. *{4}* Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. *{5}* Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!' *{6}* And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. *{7}* 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. *{8}* Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; *{9}* cure the sick who are there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' *{10}* But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, *{11}* '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'.... *{16}* "Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me." *{17}* The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!" *{18}* He said to them, "I watched Satan fall

from heaven like a flash of lightning. {19} 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. {20} Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

As a surprise gift for graduation from college, and among the most thoughtful I've ever received, my parents purchased a roundtrip ticket to Italy for me because somewhere along the way they had heard that I was interested in visiting Assisi, the hometown of St. Francis. That was the first, and only, time I have been to Europe. It turned out to be a two week trip, most of which was actually spent in the small town of Assisi (I did spend a few days in Rome as well).

I remember and tell you this not to recount travel stories about a great trip (which it was), but because I was fortunate enough to have had someone offer some really great tips on packing. In fact, I think that was the only time I ever packed so efficiently and so lightly. Just a few weeks ago, I spent two days in Lansing for the Synod Assembly and was surprised at how much "stuff" I took along.

Anyway, there was a twofold "secret". First was knowing how to fold, roll really, the clothes so they took up as little space as possible in the suitcase. Second, I took only about a week's worth of clothing, washing out underwear, socks, shirts, etc., each night so they could be used one other time. It worked quite well as I recall, but these twenty-eight years later I'm not so sure how I would feel about it. Perhaps, since deodorant and air conditioning (it was August) were apparently not in widespread use in the areas we traveled in (I went with a friend) at that time, we fit in a little better than we imagined.

Today Jesus, using some stark and startling images, talked about traveling lightly and with a sense of purpose. The issue for the Church, as well as for all individual Christians, I believe, is to figure out what to do with these "marching orders".

Here's a cranky digression. With all the "hubbub" over what the Bibles says about homosexuality and a few other things, I'm not aware that *any* of the largest and loudest among our fundamentalist Christian sisters and brothers are spending any time worrying about whether or not today's particular directives from Jesus need to be taken literally and followed to the letter.

Personally, I am grateful for those brave, saintly, and more or less sane, individuals throughout history who have tried to take Jesus at what they perceived to be His word. Most notable is St. Francis of Assisi and, more

recently, Mother Teresa of Calcutta. A good case can be made that Luther himself might qualify among such a crowd, because according to tradition it was only the good sense and management of his wife Katie that prevented the family from being totally penniless.

Simplicity of life is good on so many levels and for so many reasons, but I don't think in this case Jesus' primary objective was to make a new set of rules and regulations. I have a difficult time believing that God is terribly concerned about a few shirts or shoes too many or even about some of the other trinkets we acquire or become attached to along the way.

The more important and always relevant questions from today's Gospel reading are: What is weighing me down? What is holding me back? What is getting in the way? What would I be better off without?

These are good questions for individuals as well as for denominations and congregations and they do not need to be confined to "churchy" or religious things.

The people of the first reading from Isaiah were holding on to unfulfilled expectations and deep disappointment with their current circumstances. Perhaps they were also holding on to memories of some distant "golden age". It's fair to say they were disappointed with God.

Some members of the congregation at Galatia seemed to be holding on to past religious practices that were no longer helpful or necessary as well as to certain ideas about who God was, what God required, and who was included among God's people.

As I said, many denominations as well as individual congregations (such as ours) are asking similar questions. Despite the prevalence of so many new programs, I'm not convinced there is one correct answer applicable for all. Some will do better than others. Some will fail miserably. Some will succeed beyond their wildest imaginations. The important thing is to keep asking and to remain open to what God has in store.

Finally, I have taken many personality profile kinds of tests, but never remember the results. I think, however, it's pretty safe to assume that I am not a "type A" personality. Most of you know that designation refers to someone who is very goal oriented and result focused. We could read the advice Jesus gave to the disciples today as very "type A"- "just get it done".

Well, with all due respect, I happen to *enjoy* the journey and many times the process is just as valuable as the result. So, here's to taking the time to meander. Here's to taking time to chat with folks along the way. Here's to a side trip or two. I've found that God has many surprises in store "off the map".

Let us pray. Lord Jesus, whatever form our journeys take, help us to know you are with us.

AMEN.