



(Year C) Luke 10:1-9

1 The Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them out ahead of him, in pairs, to all the towns and places he himself was to visit. 2 He said to them, 'The harvest is rich but the labourers are few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to send labourers to his harvest. 3 Start off now, but remember, I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. 4 Carry no purse, no haversack, no sandals. Salute no one on the road. 5 Whatever house you go into, let your first words be, 'Peace to this house!' 6 And if a man of peace lives there, your peace will go and rest on him; if not, it will come back to you. 7 Stay in the same house, taking what food and drink they have to offer, for the labourer deserves his wages; do not move from house to house. 8 Whenever you go into a town where they make you welcome, eat what is set before you. 9 Cure those in it who are sick, and say, 'The kingdom of God is very near to you.'

Other readings: Isaiah 66:10-14 Psalm 65 (66) Galatians 6:14-18

Only the Gospel of Luke gives this report of a sending out by Jesus of seventy-two (or seventy, in some manuscripts) disciples with the apparent task of preparing the way for his arrival. The number of disciples recalls Moses' appointment of elders to assist in his work reported in the book of Numbers (chapter 11). The logistics of the exercise are difficult to imagine, but the justification of it is clear. The harvest is rich, but the labourers are few. This has been a constant in the history of the Church, and is so in our day particularly due to the pressures of secularism and materialism which to many seem more attractive than labouring in the vineyard of Christ.

Jesus gives instructions as to how his disciples should behave. They are taught to provide little for themselves and to be single-minded. This seems to be the sense of the strange command to salute no one on the way. The salutation of 'peace' may be seen as encompassing the whole gospel message, which is to be imposed on no-one. They are told to remain in one house, avoiding any rivalry there might be among their hosts.

The announcement of 'peace', the peace of God, lies at the heart of the gospel, and is reflected in the words from Isaiah in the first reading 'Now towards her I send flowing peace, like a river.' These words are addressed to Jerusalem after the return of the people from exile in Babylon and they express the constant concern of the God who has not abandoned the people despite their sinfulness. The task of those called and sent by Jesus is precisely to bring the peace of God. They are to do this by proclaiming what Jesus proclaims, that the kingdom of God is near, and they are to confirm their message as Jesus did by acts of healing.

Am I single-minded in living the gospel?

How do I make the peace of the kingdom a reality for others?

Pray for an increase in labourers in the Lord's vineyard.

Thank God for the fidelity shown by so many in the work of the gospel.

