

## Luke 10:1-20

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."

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A couple weeks ago I was packing to leave for General Assembly where I would be a commissioner. As I packed, I tried to think of all the things I might need in my 8 day stay in a strange city. I wanted to be ready for any and all contingencies.

The airline dictated that I could take 2 carry on items and for an additional \$25 I could check one suitcase, provided said suitcase did not weigh more than 50#.

And with these guidelines in mind I began to pack

First- of course were the clothes: I knew it would be a casual week so Jeans and t-shirts seemed the most logical of choices, of course under-gutchies and socks where required. I knew I really only need 1 pair of shoes, for days filled with walking to & fro from the hotel to the convention center and beyond- Tennis Shoes. But, I took my trusty tie up tennis shoes in the suitcase and planned to wear my slip-on moccasins for the travel days and airport security screenings, from past experience I know it is a hassle to have to remove my tie up shoes at every checkpoint involved in the airline travel of post 9/11. I knew my hotel had a swimming pool, so on the off chance I would have some free time haha and wanted some exercise hahahaha, I packed a swimsuit (I needn't have bothered) but- with the best of intentions- into the suitcase it went. And of course I would need PJ's. And lastly, having previous experience with conference centers- I knew it could be overly air conditioned and so I threw in 3, count them 3, heavy sweatshirts. (It was not enough)

Then I turned my attention to the sundries. I packed my prescriptions, my vitamins, deodorant, shampoo, a razor. hair goo and a comb. And at my age I don't travel anywhere without Tylenol.

Suitcase packed- It came in at 35#.

Then I packed my backpack- Laptop (Required for the work we were doing) my Kindle, 3 books, a sketch book and coloring pencils, assorted cords and connecting doohickeys. And my back-up thingamajig. My purse contained the travel itinerary, and snacks for the long day of travel.

3 different bags the lightest of which weighed in at 7 pounds the heaviest at 35. For one week. And I knew where I was going, what the weather would be like generally, and what my accommodations would be like- relatively speaking.

Contrast that with today's scripture. Jesus sends his disciples, 70 of them, out two by two, on a mission trip, with nothing but the clothes on their back.

They are to rely entirely on the hospitality of others. Or as they say down south - the "kindness of strangers".

Have you ever had to rely on the Kindness of total and complete strangers? It can be quite scary. A long long time ago- I took an ill-fated spring break trip with my college roommate to visit her grandfather in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Nothing about that trip went as planned, and it was close to being the worst vacation ever. In fact I think it was the worst vacation ever.

It was the kind of vacation that when it's time to go home, you are rejoicing. And so we were in a fine good mood as we got into my little 72 Chevy Vega. Now some of you already suspect, just by the mention of that car name, that things are not going to go well, and you would be right. As we headed north on I-75 the car began to act up. I stopped at a service station and the mechanic told me it needed new spark plugs, so I bought new spark plugs. We got back on the road. The car still wasn't acting right, and we stopped at another Service station. This mechanic told us it need a full oil change and new filters. We bought the oil change and all the new filters. We headed back onto the road the car was still not acting

right. I pulled into a 3rd service station and there was told the car just need a good tune up, but it could wait until we got back to Kentucky, with no problem. And so we headed off for a 3rd time...

A short time later we went from going 55 on the freeway to 40, 30, 25, 10, to not going at all. There we were, two young women on the side of I-75 in Georgia with no clue what to do with a dead car. This was of course eons before cell phones would be invented. I popped the hood and began to look under it, like I might know what was wrong. I did not.

Trish and I conferred about our situation, and our resources, after the air filters, oil change, and spark plugs- we had \$5 left between us. Things were not looking good. I knew the last exit back had been quite a ways, and we could not see an exit or even a sign for one, up ahead, but if we were going to have to walk, towards home seemed like a better direction than away from it. And so we started walking. We had not gone far, we could still look back and see the little dead Vega, when a semi pulled over and offered to give us a lift. We conferred again, being women alone, one has to be careful about these things. We decided that it was two against one and we would risk the ride. We got in and the driver started up, as we approached the exit. he said calmly, "I'm not gonna take you gals to this exit, I'm gonna take you on to the next one" I don't know about Trish but my heart sank into the pit of my stomach at that moment. I was pretty sure we were in the process of being kidnapped. But sure enough he did take us to the next exit, and then to a Semi truck dealer and repair shop he knew just off the highway. He told us the owner was honest and we could trust him.

He dropped us off and headed back out onto the road. We walked into the semi truck store and were met by strange stares by many men, only men, not a woman in sight. This was after all a semi truck shop in the mid-seventies- not too many women in that field back then, none at this shop. We found the owner and explained

that our car had died out on the highway. He sent one of his tow trucks to pick it up and bring it in. They had a look at it and told us we had blown a head gasket, and all the valves were shot. In case you do not know it- that's bad, really, really bad. And expensive.

The combination of this bad news and the smell of tobacco smoke and diesel engines, made me sick to my stomach. I must have looked like I might lose my cookies- because the owner took me into his office had me sit down and gave me a drink of water.

He said "We're gonna fix this. We're gonna call your daddy, and talk it over with him." I told him I didn't have enough money for a long distance day time call. I had never called long distance in the day time in my life, but I knew it was expensive. The man said. he would make the call. And he did. He explained to my dad what was wrong with my car. and that he did not actually have the equipment to re-machine such small valves as my little car took, and he would need to send it up to Macon and it would take about 3 days for them to get the parts back. He then explained that there were only 2 hotels in town and one was for nice young women, and one was definitely not. He would make sure we got settled at the "right" hotel for nice young ladies. He told my dad to call his own mechanic and tell him what the problem was and ask what he would charge to repair it. He said if Dad's mechanic was going to charge less than what he had told my dad it was- he would do the work for less. His price was actually less than what my dads regular mechanic could do the work for. He took dads credit card information over the phone and that was it.

He took us to the hotel, put us up- at his own expense, I found out later from my dad he never charged him for that. Each day he came and got us and took us to hang out at the shop. His wife packed us lunches and we ate with the guys. At night he took us to his home and fed us dinner with his family and then drove us to the hotel to spend the night. After 3 days, my car was fixed and he

sent us on our way. As we were saying our goodbyes and thanking him profusely he simply said- "I'm a shiner and a Christian and I have a daughter of my own- If she was in trouble I would want someone to take care of her."

Needless to say- we made it all the way home that day. No more car problems- at least not on that trip- it was after all a Vega.

Jesus was asking a lot of the disciples. Go out on a journey, take nothing with you. He even tells them He is sending them out like lambs among the Wolves. He is asking them to do something very very scary and possibly dangerous, and definitely outside their comfort zone. But I think Jesus knew that they would encounter good people. Not all good people, there would be some times when they would need to shake the dust from their feet. But Overall, good people. And he knew their message was important. The kingdom of God has come near. Not it *will* come near, but it *has come near*, it is already here. For it is in this simple act of hospitality graciously offered and humbly received that the kingdom does indeed come near.