

Isaiah 66:10-14
Galatians 6:1-16
St. Luke 10:1-11,16-20

Luke 10:1-11

10After 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. ²He 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. ³Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. ⁴Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. ⁵Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!' ⁶And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. ⁷Remain 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. ⁸Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; ⁹cure the sick who are there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' ¹⁰But 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.'

In this morning's Gospel lesson Jesus sends people out with the message, "The kingdom of God has come near to you." He is teaching people how to be disciples. Discipleship is well known in Christian circles. It is often supposed to be what you have to do to get into the Kingdom of God - at least I've heard that interpretation. I've heard it said that discipleship is that long, hard process of trying to follow Jesus' instruction - and, if you do it well enough, you will be **rewarded** with the kingdom of God.

If that is our definition of discipleship and our definition of the kingdom of God - then Jesus seems to be encouraging his disciples in the Gospel lesson by telling them "The kingdom of God has come near." It sounds like Jesus is saying, "You only have to put up with discipleship a little longer...because the kingdom of God is near." We get that impression when we think that

discipleship is about how we behave **today**. And the *kingdom of God* - is about **eternity**. And we start to think the two couldn't have anything to do with each other.

The kingdom of God **does** mean eternity...but you are living in eternity now. The Gospel reads "The kingdom of God has come near to you."

It is not clear that this is good news. It is still up in the air as to whether this announcement of the kingdom of God is a blessing or a curse. This morning's gospel lesson does not resolve the question. Jesus tells his disciples, "Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; cure the sick who are there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'" **The kingdom of God is good news for the faithful.**

Jesus goes on to say, "But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its street and say, '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.'" **The nearness of the kingdom of God is the judgment of those who will not welcome the Gospel.**

In some cases the nearness of the kingdom of God is the *blessed assurance* of the Gospel. In some cases it is the *judgment of the almighty* - yet, it is the same kingdom.

The kingdom of God is eternity. But it is not something we **wait** for as a reward for good discipleship. Jesus Christ came to us and he brought eternity with him. What we do **today** is part of eternity. What we do **today** has consequences for us and for our world stretching into the future farther than we can see. As with Jesus in the Gospel lesson - it is not clear if those consequences are going to be good or bad ... It is only clear that they are *important*. The kingdom of God is part of your life and you live in eternity - **today**.

We should think about whether or not we consider that to be good news.

Are you willing for the things you do today to be part of your life for eternity? How you feel about your neighbors? How much you know? How patient you are? Do you want your life to stay the way it is - for eternity?

Perhaps you disciples are more important than you realize. Forgiveness is not just something that fixes sin. Forgiveness brings God into your life and now you live in the kingdom of God.

When we think of forgiveness only as a way to wipe out the sins of the past, we make forgiveness trivial. That is when we start thinking in terms of putting off forgiveness until we are ready to die. Then we can fix everything and make things right before we begin eternity.

Let's get over the commonly held notion that eternity will come later. **Sin is nourished in a church that puts off eternity.** Everything we do can be dismissed with half-acknowledged thoughts of "I have time to repent." We shrug through "I will make up for it later." "It can be fixed." "Whoever has some trouble with what I've done will get over it." "I will be forgiven." And we use the term "forgiven" as a comfort for the future. Jesus teaches it as a way to live today. Forgiveness means that God comes into your life now.

We think of the kingdom of God as something that will happen in the future and we use the future to buy sin. The future looks good enough, long enough, we can afford sin. The longer our future the more sin we think we can afford. We think sin can be fixed. The thought that whatever we do has no consequences leads to lives with no direction, and a frustrated try to follow Jesus' rules so we can **someday** hope to live in the kingdom of God. Someday we hope to be part of eternity.

What you do today - July 4, 2010 - is part of eternity. It is important. I think most of the trouble we cause for ourselves comes about when we dismiss whatever we do as being **trivial**. We think of what we do as having no consequences. It can be fixed, healed, forgiven. There's plenty of time.

It is true; all things can be forgiven – but those things are building **you**. You are a product of all you have done. Everything you do will continue production. Every decision you make, every turn you choose, **is part of eternity**. The lives we live everyday continue to point the direction for ourselves and our community.

We like to tell ourselves that we start fresh everyday. **It would be comforting to think we were that unimportant.** But do we start fresh, really?

Did you wake up this morning free of every decision you've ever made? Who you married, the work you do, where you live, whom you have chosen to forgive. Have you tried to make people like you? **How** have you tried to make people like you? Have you tried to tell people what to do? Have you been committed to listening or speaking? Have you spent your time trying to protect yourself from the evil in the world or have you spent your time learning to overcome it? The things you have done, large and small, have produced your life. So look at it. What would you like to change?

You are continuing to produce your life.

What we do **now**, how we act **today**, determines our direction. The Kingdom of God really is near.

It would be a comfort to hide our God-given eternal souls in an accumulation of triviality - but Jesus teaches differently. He chose seventy people and gave them the simple message, "The kingdom of God has come near to you." and the impact of those seventy lives is still felt today. Jesus has come into our lives and exploded the myth of being unimportant. We are residents of the kingdom of God and what we do is part of eternity.

That is the power of forgiveness. That is what it means to be constantly reconciled with God. You live with God and that makes you very important. Jesus instructed his disciples, "...cure the sick...and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'" **Good news!** Jesus instructed his disciples to say, "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." **Judgment!**

We might well ask, "Is the Kingdom of God good news or is it judgement? The answer is: **It is eternity.** Whether eternity is good news or judgement depends upon how happy you are to hear the Gospel.

Jesus Christ brings eternity into our lives. God **is** with us. The kingdom of God **is** near - whether or not that is good news.

We have the kingdom of God - but we have it **now**. We only wish we could delay shipment. It is ours now and we have to do something with it.

Jesus sent out his disciples proclaiming the kingdom of God, ready or not. To some a blessing, to some a curse...but part of our lives.

People could no longer buy sin with the future. There is no future; the kingdom of God is now. What we do now makes us what we are.

Jesus Christ forgives sin. He brings God into our lives.

God takes your life seriously. He has made you a resident of the kingdom of God. What you do is important. People who live with the power of Almighty God in their lives are people of consequence. What they do has an effect that rings through eternity. That is a description of you.

What you do **now** effects eternity. The decisions you make in your business. The things you choose to say to other people. How you decide to respond when things are not going right. How you choose to celebrate when things are going right. How much you listen. How much you want to grow, change, think. How much energy you will choose to give to this church, this community.

It is all part of the kingdom of God. It is all part of eternity.

You have been denied the luxury of being trivial.

Jesus Christ has brought God into your life and you are important. You have consequences. God has made you important and he is very interested in you. He has made himself part of what you say and think and do.

No matter what your address, you live in the kingdom of God. No matter what your future, you are a part of eternity.