

## Reflection

“Then he went about among the villages teaching. 7 He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. 8 He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff: no bread, no bag, no money in their belts, 9 but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. 10 He said to them, “Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. 11 If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.”

Ok then. How's that for marching orders. This reading today that Sang Hwa read in Korean and most of us followed along in English is filled with passion.

Jesus in on the move and he comes to his home town of Nazareth where his family lives, where people he grew up with are still there, where people know him and his family, where he would have attended synagogue, probably where he had first been taught the torah, the Law and the Prophets. He had gone away and he had come back as a controversial teacher, and healer with a growing following.

On the Sabbath he went back to the synagogue where he grew up and taught. And people are astounded at the unusual wisdom he brings, and how he is able to open minds, inspire hearts and heal bodies. And they say, “wait a minute. Isn't this Mary's son? Isn't this James' little brother? We know this guy.” And it says that they took offense to him.

At first it isn't very clear why they took offense, but then Jesus said that this seems to be a home town problem- that there seems to be a particularly sensitive nerve that prophets touch when they go home. So he didn't take it personally, and he moved on.

But then a little later he circled back with his disciples preparing them to face similar controversy, to face opposition and rejection. That is where the dust shaking bit comes in. Clearly, being a disciple, being a follower of Jesus, trying to embody and promote his way of

love and justice can earn you enemies. It is not a tea party. Not a walk in the park. It can blow up in your face and it can take real courage.

When Julie and I talked about spending some summer weeks exploring the United Church of Canada's 3 part vision, Deep Spirituality, Bold Discipleship, Daring Justice, I drew the bold discipleship straw. And frankly, the word disciple to describe my way of being a Christian has never captured my imagination. I see myself as a follower of the way of Jesus, as seeker of God's wisdom and God's loving ways, as a minister of the gospel of justice and peace. So many other descriptive ways of talking about the path we try to follow and the way we try to be together in the world. I suppose disciple is one of them.

And then I remembered Janet Gear and the Theological Banquet, and the diversity of lived theology within this beautiful United Church of ours. And I realized that when the United Church of Canada calls us to bold discipleship, that is simply a way of calling us to live out our faith boldly, however we feel called to live it and describe it.

So if we are one of those wonderful evangelical United Church people, bold discipleship means boldly sharing the gospel of Jesus and fearlessly inviting people on to the path of Christian faith. If you are one of those loyal Ecclesial Christians whose faith is expressed in building the beloved community of the church, then bold discipleship means that you will stop at nothing until the life of the church community is a beacon of loving light in the world through everything we do in this place. If you are one of those kind hearted missional United Church people, bold discipleship means boldly going into the neighborhood eagerly finding and meeting the real needs of those who suffer around us. And if you are one of those tenacious ecumenical Christians, then bold discipleship means that you will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like water and peace like an ever-flowing stream and you will boldly step into the fray of the world. And if you are one of those wise Spiritual Christians, then bold discipleship means never giving up on the search for holy wisdom, and refusing to see anything but a soul at work within every person and within the heart of creation.

You see discipleship can mean many things in this beautiful community. But what the gospel tells us is that however you see it, however you choose to live it, be bold about it. As Jesus said in another place, let your light shine- don't hide it. Be courageous in your

practice of it. Do it together (I love that he sent them out in pairs. Faith has never been a solitary endeavour.). And expect that it might be hard, it might cause conflict, it might get you into trouble. That's ok. It is the nature of the Jesus' way that it is rooted in love so deep that it will shake the foundations of lesser ways of being. If we are bold about it, we will get ourselves into trouble. But that is ok. It will be the right kind of trouble.

As the late great orator US Senator John Lewis said in a tweet in 2018 "Do not get lost in a sea of despair. Be hopeful, be optimistic. Our struggle is not the struggle of a day, a week, a month, or a year, it is the struggle of a lifetime. Never, ever be afraid to make some noise and get in good trouble, necessary trouble."

That sounds like bold discipleship to me.

Amen