

Stretching Toward Sunday

Thoughts, readings and reflections
based on this week's lectionary readings

July 7, 2019

Proper 9C / Ordinary 14C / Pentecost +4

The readings this week:

- 2 Kings 5:1-14 ◦ Psalm 30
- Galatians 6:(1-6), 7-16 ◦ Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

[Click here to read this week's Scriptures](#)

Interdependence Day



On July 4, the United States will celebrate Independence Day, marking its freedom from rule by England. Mostly it's become a national holiday marked by barbecues, fireworks, parades, picnics, and relaxation rather than a review of history. Of

course, the United States isn't the only country to have a dedicated day to celebrate independence or other important national events. [Click here](#) for a listing of Independence and National Days.

Why is independence so important and why is it such a marker of freedom? Why do we strive to be free and on our own? It's not always the best path to choose; just ask the disappointed and dazed folks in the United Kingdom following the recent Brexit Referendum to leave the European Union. Freedom isn't free. In fact, it can be quite dangerous and costly in the long run.

Maybe we would do well to celebrate our interdependence instead—especially when it comes to our faith. Sure, we've been set free in Christ, as we certainly know freed *from* sin and death, but just as importantly freed to live in community. We are freed *into* life, freed into relationship, and freed into love of God and neighbor. In short, we're freed into interdependence. No longer are we to be lone rangers doing our own thing without regard for others. Yes, our freedom depends on our interdependence. We are stronger together.

In this week's lesson from Luke's gospel, Jesus sends out 70 others to go ahead of him, not alone, but in pairs. There is teamwork in this tough assignment. Jesus makes it clear that he is sending his disciples out "like lambs into the midst of wolves." The going will be tough, and they will need each other's company, encouragement, and support. And they don't even get to pack a suitcase, much less any "heat" for protection against these wolves. They go out two-by-two to announce the coming reign of God, dependent upon the kindness of strangers who will share in their peace.

Of course, they don't go without power. "Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever reject you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me," Jesus says. They're even given the authority to tramp on the powers of evil (imaged as snakes and scorpions) without hurt. Even so, they are not to celebrate their own power, their own freedom to shake dust off their feet and tread on evil; they are to rejoice in their interdependence, that their "names are written in heaven."

You'll also find hints of this communal celebration of interdependence woven throughout the Old Testament reading from Isaiah 66 and in the story of Naaman's healing in the alternate first reading from 2 Kings. The psalmist invites us to make a joyful noise to God and the interdependence of creation and God's power to create and protect. Finally, in his letter to the Galatians, Paul reminds his readers to "bear one another's burdens" and "work for the good of all."

It is so easy to be swayed by the promises of the powerful and would-be powerful, to hear their empty promises of gain and wealth and freedom. We are bombarded on all sides by loud and often raucous voices jockeying for position to be on top, to be the winner, and to stand strong and independent. Even though our national holidays are certainly worth celebrating and the abundance and bounty of this land worth giving thanks for, we must never forget that celebrating our interdependence in Christ is far more important. The kingdom of God has indeed come near, and in that reality is the freedom that truly is for everyone. Hallelujah! Thanks be to God.

~ Sharron R. Blezard, [Stewardship of Life](#)



Reflecting on the Word



___ 1st Reading: [2 Kings 5:1-14](#)

When have you transformed a situation by a simple observation or suggestion? Who are the ones who exercise power in your community in quiet but important ways? What miracles do you dare to hope for in your own life? When have you felt powerless but then received help from the most unlikely source? How is God calling you to be a source of healing for others? [Weekly Seeds](#)

___ Psalm Reading: [Psalm 30](#)

What was David's reason for giving thanks to God? For what reason did David call others to give thanks to God? Why did David make the appeal to God? Some connect Psalm 30 with 1 Chronicles 21. If the connection is correct, what was David's specific sin? Contrast the condition of David's heart before he was forgiven to after he was forgiven. Has there ever been a time in your life when God's forgiveness turned your heart from wailing to dancing, from sackcloth to joy, from silence to singing? [Monday Night Bible Study](#)



A cup of cold water. A shared piece of bread. A touch on the arm. The gentle stroke of a hand on your forehead as you lie in pain. A kind word.

Jesus sent the seventy into the towns where he would eventually preach. These forerunners, charged with a sort of knightly code of honor, healed the sick and proclaimed the Kingdom of God.

The people Jesus sent out were changed by their acts of mercy. Rather than our actions bringing about the Kingdom in the world, the Kingdom of God comes forth in us through our actions and our interaction with those we serve. Love's demands transform us and that is worth any sacrifice necessary.

~ Suzanne Guthrie, [At the Edge of Enclosure](#)

___ 3rd Reading: [Galatians 6:\(1-6\), 7-16](#)

It is said that many people have fallen away from Christianity because they could not accept all the "rules" that seemed to come with it, nor the people who thought about faith in terms of rules, yet could not keep those rules themselves. How do you feel about that and why? What "burdens" do you think Paul is talking about in verse 2 and following? In what ways might Paul's advice about comparing ourselves to others be a tough but necessary word today? When have you heard of someone who "grew weary in doing good?" Why is it easy to get tired of such a thing, and what advice does Paul offer us? What do you think it means to have confidence in God rather than ourselves? What are some practical ways to put our confidence in God rather than trying to please other people? [Faith Element](#)

___ 4th Reading: [Luke 10:1-11, 16-20](#)

What do we learn about the seventy followers and the purpose of their mission? How are they to prepare? What is their message? How will their needs be met? What do you think Jesus means when he says that he sends them out "like lambs in the midst of wolves?" How can you relate to this metaphor? What is Jesus trying to teach about being witnesses? What does "the kingdom of God" mean? How is it that the kingdom of God comes near? Jesus speaks of rejection. How are these seventy to deal with the rejection they will receive? What or whom are these inhospitable people ultimately rejecting? Verses 17-20 recount the return of those who were sent out. How do they describe their mission experience? What are they excited about? How does Jesus respond to their report? In what situations is Jesus calling you to bear witness to the nearness of the kingdom of God? What will it mean for you to respond to his call? In what can you rejoice? [InterVarsity](#)

Praying Toward Sunday

Naaman's Story (inspired by 2 Kings 5: 1-14)

a little girl
an army commander
a religious zealot

for one brief moment
difference suspended
doubt superseded

ordinary water
simple ritual
extraordinary presence

May we have the courage of the child
to reach out to even the powerful.

May we have the wisdom of Naaman
to ask for help when we are lost.

May we have the faithfulness of Elisha
to love outside the lines.

~ Katherine Hawker, [Liturgies Outside](#).