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First UMC

Springboro, Ohio

July 3, 2016

Series: “Life Together with Luke”

Message: “Learning to Depend on It”

Scripture: Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

On this July 4th weekend, as we think about our country, our freedom, and the signing of the Declaration of Independence, I want to begin with words that Benjamin Franklin spoke at the time of the signing of that historic document. He said, “We must hang together, or assuredly we will all hang separately.” And he knew all too well what that meant literally.

Later we would put it into our pledge of allegiance: “One nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”

Life together is essential to who we are as Americans just as it is to who we are as Christians because in both, we live together under God. We understand that we are stronger together, even in the midst of differences and disagreements, that our freedom is bound up with freedom for all, that we need each other to help us grow beyond ourselves, to care about more than ourselves, but the right of all people to have basic freedoms.

And yet, life together, as Americans, and as Christians, is hard, especially when people think and act differently than we do, when they use their freedoms in ways that are different that we would like. And if we don’t remember and hold fast to the core of who we are and what we believe, we might find ourselves reacting in ways that undermine these core beliefs.

And so we look to the scriptures to help us learn how to live together, one church, one nation, under God. We look to the scriptures to help us learn how to live together in Gods’ grace and love, in a way that allows the light of God’s Kingdom to shine through us. This summer, we are particularly looking to the gospel of Luke to guide us.

Today in our passage, we learn that if we are going to live this life together well, we have to depend on each other. First, we need a friend in faith who we share with, a partner in this life of faith and ministry together.

As Jesus sends out the 72 to do his Kingdom work, he sends them out two by two. He does this for several reasons. David Lose describes it well. “And so Jesus sends them out in pairs. Thus, when one falters, the other can help. When one is lost, the other can seek the way. When one is discouraged, the other can hold faith for both for a while. That’s what the company of believers does—we hold on to each other, console each other, encourage and embolden each other, and even believe for each other.”

Who is your special friend in faith? And what ministry are you sent out by Jesus to do?

Today I want to encourage you to find a friend in faith and to depend on them and encourage them as you go out and do ministry together. Maybe its going to the food pantry together, maybe its teaching Sunday school together, maybe its praying together for the church and the world. We are all called to be a part of the harvest, no matter how new of a Christian we are, or whether we feel like we’ve been around and done it all. The harvest is still plentiful, but the workers are few.

Jesus directs the disciples, and us, to step out in faith and to trust our friend in faith and ministry, but he also directs us to trust the hospitality of those we are in ministry to. He says, go together, but don’t take anything with you—no purse, or bag, no sandals or distractions. (Today’s list: no cell phone, tablet, suitcase, credit card.)

This seems pretty hard. Why would Jesus do this? But we get attached to our stuff, don’t we? We really like our human comforts. And yet they slow us down, they become obstacles for our ministry. We depend on them rather than on each other and God. Karoline Lewis asks, “But what are the things we put in place of people? What are the objects we hoard so as to avoid dependence on the other? What are those items we deem necessary for our survival, when our abundance is actually already abounding in the people around us?”

Rely on the hospitality of those you are in ministry to. Can you picture that in your ministry? Relying on someone is the best way to get to know them. It also levels the playing field and reminds us that we all have gifts to give and that often receiving from others is a double blessing. We are blessed in the receiving and they are blessed in the giving.

And this exchange, the ministry you do, whatever it is, should begin in peace, just peace. This is our first goal in our ministry together and as Christians: to offer peace and to receive peace. Peace provides a strong foundation, the only foundation for healing. The two go hand in hand. Peace doesn’t mean that we agree on everything, but it means that we understand that we are united under God, and we trust that God’s grace is sufficient to allow us to live in peace. Once the gift of peace is shared, the gift of healing and the good news of God’s Kingdom flows easily.

As you think of your life, those you live with at home, at church, at work, how can you share God’s peace with them and live in a way that conveys peace, trusting that when you find that peace, God’s healing and good news will flow easily from that?

What we find is that as we step out in faith and depend on our faith friends, and those we are in ministry to, we become more able to depend on God’s presence and power with us in the form of the Holy Spirit. And when we do, amazing things happen.

The disciples return with joy, totally pumped up because, “Even the demons submitted to us in your name.”

But we don’t get to that point of joy together without depending on each other, being sent out in ministry together, without relying on God and the hospitality of others.

And so today, I send you out in pairs to depend on God and others with the mission of sharing Jesus’ powerful message of peace and promise.