

Partners with Jesus and Each Other  
Luke 9:1-6  
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
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It has been said that great leaders are those who work themselves out of a job.

In other words, great leaders are those who understand that they are not indispensable, but that others *can* do their job. Great leaders are those who train, nurture, and mentor others in ways that mean that their job will still be done even in their absence.

And, anyone who has ever had a job, especially a job they care deeply about, knows that this can be a scary thing to do. Even when you believe in this philosophy, it can be anxiety raising to actually hand over the keys, offer up the opportunities, train someone else with the skills for your job.

Because, we like to be needed. We like for people to rely on us. We like to be indispensable. Even with all the stress and strain that these realities bring, we like the admiration that comes with being *the one* who knows how to do what we do, *the one* without whom it could not happen. And, let's be honest, we like job security.

In the early days after COVID came into our lives, your church staff started thinking a little differently about our responsibilities and the information each of us kept. In the face of the threat of COVID, we realized how important it was that none of us was the only one with the ability or the information to take care of important tasks around the church.

So we taught each other skills and - don't tell the IT people among us - we even shared passwords. We wanted to be sure that should one of us succumb to this new virus, the ministry of the church could continue.

And yet that wasn't really just a good posture for that time, but it is a good posture for life.

And Jesus knew that, too.

Here we are, as Jesus is doing the important work of healing and teaching and inviting people to live from God's heart, as more and more people are hearing about him and reaching out, as he is realizing that the job is so much bigger than just him. He knows that the reach can grow so much wider if everything that happens isn't dependent upon him being nearby.

And so he shares power and sends his disciples to do the same work he had been doing, to go and heal and teach on behalf of God.

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He sends them with authority and with power. And he asks them to trust it.

He sends them with a few instructions - things that will make the road ahead of them easier and that will root their work in important values.

Did you hear what those instructions were?

First, Jesus says, "Take nothing for your journey: no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money—not even an extra tunic" (Luke 9:3, NRSVUE).

Or, as *The Message* says it, "Don't load yourselves up with equipment. Keep it simple; *you* are the equipment" (Luke 9:3, *The Message*).

In other words, Jesus sends the disciples off with the reminder that they are enough and with the challenge to rely not only themselves, but on God and on the communities to which they will go.

See, this instruction is both about not getting bogged down in all the plans and possibilities, in distracting oneself or others with tools and tricks, but it is also about working with the people they are serving and allowing them and their resources and their hospitality to be part of the work.

And that leads to the second instruction. "Whatever house you enter, stay there, and leave from there" (Luke 9:4, NRSVUE). This is both a reminder to receive the hospitality that is offered and also to be humble in the process. Rather than looking for the biggest and best place to stay or the richest person to take you in, Jesus says to simply go and receive what is offered and to be satisfied.

Finally, Jesus speaks a word of reality knowing that not everyone will be excited to receive them, not everyone will be ready to hear the proclamations of God's kin-dom. "Wherever they do not welcome you, as you are leaving that town shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them" (Luke 9:5, NRSVUE).

Again citing *The Message*, we hear it this way, "If you're not welcomed, leave town. Don't make a scene. Shrug your shoulders and move on" (Luke 9:5, *The Message*).

In other words, it is not all dependent upon you. Go. Do the good work to which you are called. Share the good news. And know that it is not your responsibility to force others to receive it.

Friends, these instructions aren't only for the twelve who lived and worked and traveled with Jesus some 2,000 years ago. But they are for us, as well. They are for us because we, too, are called to be partners in Jesus' work.

And we know that. We acknowledge it all the time. Every Sunday when we gather at the communion table we say that “[a]s we eat of the bread, we offer our bodies to the continuing work of Jesus in our world.”

We make this commitment weekly.

And in so many ways we talk about and commit to being the hands and feet of Jesus in this world. Even when people join the church we ask them if they want to be part of this community of faith as together we strive to follow Jesus. And we know that following Jesus means doing his work in this world.

Meanwhile, sometimes we hear passages such as this one that Mark read for us today and we are happy to leave it in the past, as instructions only for the twelve. After all, Luke tells us that Jesus gave them authority over demons...the ability to cure diseases...the ability to heal the sick. Sure, we can give someone a little cold medicine, but we're pretty sure our power over demons and diseases is scant at best.

So that often becomes our excuse for relegating this reminder to the past. And if we're honest, that is about more than just our uncertainty about demons or inability to cure diseases. It is so often easier to make these instructions about someone else, doing them somewhere else.

Because it is risky business to live and work on Jesus' behalf. It is risky business to reach out to those who are hurting and to offer hope and healing. It is risky business to cross lines to draw the other in. It is risky business to go up against the powers and principalities of this world and speak a word of a different way.

Add to that the realities that sometimes we worry that we don't know enough or speak well enough or have enough courage. Sometimes we think it all depends on us. And that, in and of itself, is enough to cause us to turn the other way.

But we are reminded that as followers of Jesus, we are partners in his work. And when we trust in his power moving through us, we will come to realize that showing up matters, that there will be people with whom we can work, and that there will be resources awaiting our arrival.

We will come to remember that while it is not all up to you, or to me, or to any one of us...what each of us does still matters.

In a meditation titled, “Let's Start With Some Good News,” Cameron Trimble recently wrote this:

“It would be easy to sink into despair, to believe that darkness has won. But the truth is, even in times like these—especially in times like these—goodness persists. Today, I want to begin

the week by reminding us that many things are going WELL. Good still exists in the world...if you know where to look....

“There are people, communities, and movements quietly and persistently working for justice, healing, and restoration. In many countries, we are well on our way to a robust clean energy economy,....

“And there’s more. In communities across the U.S., grassroots organizations are stepping up to fill the gaps left by failing systems. Mutual aid networks are expanding, neighbors are supporting one another, and people are taking action to care for the most vulnerable. Libraries, long a quiet force for democracy and literacy, are experiencing a resurgence in civic engagement, providing free access to resources, safe spaces, and education in an era of disinformation....

“These moments of progress matter. They remind us that despair, while understandable, is not our only option.

Cameron goes on reminding us to hold onto hope writing, “Hope is not blind optimism. It is not ignoring the very real challenges we face. It is the steady insistence that creativity is still possible, justice is still worth fighting for, kindness is still valued, and we are not alone in this work” (“Let’s Start With Some Good News,” A Meditation by Rev. Cameron Trimble published February 3, 2025 in Piloting Faith: An (Almost) Daily Devotional from Convergence).

Friends, we are called to do the work of Jesus in this world today. Some days it may feel overwhelming and we will acknowledge that together. And still we will work, side by side with each other, and with Jesus, bringing healing, hope, and wholeness to our fragmented world. Amen.