

Proper 9C; Pentecost 5
July 7-8, 2007

Luke 10:1-12, 16-20
“Shifting Paradigms...”

I often come into the church, sit quietly in a pew, and just let the Spirit of the Lord wash over me. I sit and gaze at the altar setting, the cross over the altar. I gaze at the beautiful stain glass windows. I just sit and let my thoughts meander in and out of mind. If I got up and move to another pew, I would still be able to gaze upon the items just listed, but I would get an entirely different perspective, I would see the same things, but from a different angle, from a different point of view.

We are creatures of habit, you and I. I can tell who is here and not here on a (Saturday afternoon) Sunday morning by looking at the pews in which you would normally be sitting. We have a tendency; we have a propensity not to accept change very well, even to not vary where we sit in church.

I well remember one of our summer vacations during which we attended Sunday church services in this huge and beautiful gothic limestone late 19th century structure. Sadly, we had no trouble finding ourselves a seat. Not long after we were seated, some people sat in the pew in front of us. A little later, others sat in the pew behind us. We didn't mind of course, but felt it rather strange, that in this huge, mostly empty, chasm of the church, why this bunching up, if you will. And to our greater surprise, others entered from the opposite end into the same pew in which we were sitting.

At that point, we uncomfortably realized we had taken someone's regular Sunday morning seat, and in a passive and yet not very

subtle manner, they were letting us know about it. The point was further driven home when the peace was offered, it was extended to everyone around us, but not to us.

Anglicans do not like to change – any change! Remember the old joke? How many Anglicans does it take to change a light bulb? Change?

Established comfort zones resist change, such as always sitting in the same pew every Sunday. We become living examples of what paradigms are. Paradigms are the rules we use to analyze things to form opinions that drive our behaviors.

The negative side of paradigms is that we often use them to lock ourselves into ways of looking at or doing things; we become rigid in our thinking and doing, often finding great comfort. The danger here is that we easily become complacent and quite contented, a ‘don’t rock the boat zone!’ To illustrate my point: About three decades ago, a Swiss watchmaker created an entirely new watch – a digital watch. The Swiss watch making industry rejected this new method of keeping time. Ever hear of Seiko? By not changing paradigms, the Swiss watch makers nearly disappeared.

Ever attempt to altar, change a person’s mind set on a given topic? Married couples have fun with that challenge – of changing the mindset of a spouse. Difficult to accomplish; difficult to take a person out of their present comfort zone into an unfamiliar zone.

Paradigms are set through the experiences we have in life. The problem lies in that often the paradigms we set for ourselves are not the paradigms Our Lord, through His word and example, set for us. His paradigms, His rule, His expectations of us, never change. The Lord’s paradigms are perfect; ours are not. We are imperfect, working towards that eternal perfection through our Lord Jesus Christ. And this is the whole point in our Gospel lesson

for this morning. Jesus desires that we move from our imperfect paradigms to more perfect ones set for us by our Lord. Jesus desires that we make a paradigm shift, looking at what it means to be an ambassador for Him, and from His paradigm, from His point of view, according to His set of rules, not ours. And therein lies the challenge – overcoming our sinful human nature.

I invite you to turn with me to page 945 if the New Testament. This Luke, Chapter 10, left hand column, verse 1:

After this the Lord appointed seventy (1) others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go.

This verse begins, “After this...” After what? Last week we heard how Jesus rebuked and rejected three would be apostles; the three would be ambassadors for the kingdom. Today, we read, “Sometime after that, Jesus appointed seventy others.”

First of all the number seventy is intriguing. Remembering that the number seven is God’s perfect number, a number now profaned by the gambling industry. Jesus does nothing by mere chance. He, therefore, chose this number for a very specific reason. And for that reason, I invite you to turn with me to page 8 of the Old Testament, to Genesis 10. Here we see a listing of the Hebrew nations that were born after the flood of Noah, and if we add together all the nations listed here in chapter 10, can you now guess how many there would be? 70. Anyone care to guess how many identifiable Gentile nations there were at the time of Jesus? 70!

Coincidence? Never!

Could it be that Jesus was teaching that not only are future apostles to *come from* all the nations on the earth, but also that the apostles are to *be sent* to all the nations on the earth?

And think a bit about the 70 people who were appointed by Jesus. One minute, they are disciples; students of the way, and the next minute, appointed by Jesus to do missionary work. Talk about making a paradigm shift. Their whole world and their placement in it just did a 180-degree turn around! Before this moment, they saw Jesus as their leader, their master; they were his pupils, his followers. Jesus - the active teacher; they - the passive students. Life was easy and smooth, comfortably flowing in a nice definable groove.

Now, Jesus calls them to make a paradigm shift, to move from being receivers of the Word, from being spectators of the Word, from followers, to become givers, participants, goers, doers, and tellers.

Imagine this. One day, seemingly out of the blue, Jesus asks you to step out of your big group that had milling around him. You are caught totally by surprise. Anxiety builds within you. Suddenly and without advance warning, you have been called by Jesus to leave your comfort zone and tread into the unknown. Jesus directs you to take a position some yards away. You soon become one of a number of people Jesus directed to where you are standing. When he finishes, Jesus walks over to this small newly formed group and says, "Okay, pair up! I have an idea how you are going to spend the next few weeks."

You were just told that Jesus had something for you to do for him and it would take a few weeks. What is your first reaction? Panic? Fear? Puzzlement?

What were his directions to this newly formed group? I invite you back to page 945 of our Bibles, chapter 10, verse 2:

He 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.

"The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few..." U. S. Census data tells us that 200,000 people are born every day. The current level of missionaries numbers some 5,000. Two hundred thousand new born everyday, and this number compounding itself with each passing day, to a static five thousand; not a good ratio for getting the word out. That's forty people to one missionary for day one; 80 to 1 for day two, etc. Harvest is indeed plentiful; laborers remain far too few.

Robert McQuilkin writes, "No generation in two thousand years of Church history has produced the task force necessary to reach the world. Is this because God has not called adequate numbers? The truth is, less than one percent of Christian workers are engaged in evangelistic ministry among the unevangelized of the world. What is the other 99% doing as Christians? Is this the way the Commander-in-Chief of an army would assign his troops? Or is someone not listening? With the need so vast and the laborers so few, why do Christians not go? Someone isn't listening!"

Some of you may be asking yourselves, "Why don't the church leaders do more?" The Rev. Joseph Donders, a Roman Catholic Priest, asks, "*Should* the church leaders do more?" He responds by saying, "The chasing out of the devils that tear humankind apart is a work that cannot be done by church leaders. Nor can that work be done by the twelve, but by the seventy, who together with those twelve form eighty-four – in other words, by everyone who professes to follow Jesus. You should be on your mission. Are you healing? Are you restoring? Are you forgiving? Are you casting out?" Fr. Donders states, "There are many people who would like to get rid of the devils in their lives. Who is going to

help them? Who is going to redeem them? The Bishops? The priests? Me? No, not the twelve, but the seventy – you!”

On October 4, 1997, Promise Keepers called the men of this country to assemble on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. An estimated seven hundred thousand to one million men responded. The event was called “Stand in the Gap.” The purpose was “...to gather a diverse multitude of men in the name of Jesus Christ, to confess personal and collective sin, so that we may present to the Lord godly men on their knees in humility, then on their feet in unity, reconciled and poised for revival and spiritual awakening." To evangelize the unchurched.

I invite you to turn with me to page 775 of a pew Bible, to the book of the prophet Ezekiel, chapter 22, verse 30, at the top of the left hand column:

And I sought for anyone among them who would repair the wall and stand in the breach before me on behalf of the land, so that I would not destroy it; but I found no one.

The King James Version and the New American standard Bibles have the words, “Stand in the Gap: for what we read, “Stand in the breach”. We are called to stand in the gap. Are you fulfilling this prophecy? Jesus looking for you for you to stand in the gap, to proclaim His Word to a troubled people.

And what about our fear and timidity, lack of confidence, or whatever other brick walls we build to prevent us from responding to the call of Jesus? From Paul’s letter to the Philippians, chapter 4, right hand column, verse 13, we read:

I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

When we rely on our own resources, we can do nothing. When we rely on our own paradigms, our own rules as to what we can do, we do very little. Paul states that when we rely upon the Lord’s

paradigms, when we rely on the Lord Jesus Christ, we can do all things through Him.

On our money we read, “In God we trust.” Do we? If we did, we would not be so quick to build brick walls of excuses. Instead, we would never hesitate to do His will, for he promises that he will supply all our needs to do his work. So why the worry; why the fretting; why the procrastination? From Peter’s first letter, chapter two, verse 9, we read:

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

This is why God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit expects so much from us, for we are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a Holy Nation, for what reason? To be God’s possession. Why? So that we may proclaim the mighty acts of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. Who called us out of darkness? Jesus the Christ who is the light of this world!

This past week, the Archbishop of Nigeria, The Most Reverend Peter Akinola, was interviewed by the London Times. What follows us but a short piece from that interview: (Read from print-out)

It is called evangelism, spreading the Word. In Nigeria, he cannot open churches fast enough. Evangelism works! Proclaiming the Word bears fruit!

Hopefully, there are no more excuses, no more brick walls of defense. The message given to us this morning is plain and simple, Jesus expects us to be his missionaries, at home, school, and work, in the super market, barber shop, wherever we are. No one needs

to remind us that we are currently living in a very troubled world. The forgiving love of Jesus and hope of eternal life with Him cries to be heard. Anglicans in this country bring someone new to Christ about once every 28 years. A tragic statistic at best.

Having no reason not to go forward into the world with the message of salvation, I invite you to once again renew your commission into the army of Christ. I invite you to open your bibles to page 909, to Matthew 28, verses 19 and 20:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

By so doing, Jesus stated that our names will be recorded in heaven.

Far too many lukewarm Christians are AWOL from God’s army – that is, “absent without leave.” Hopefully, you are not one of them?