

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost, Year C  
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St. Mark's Episcopal Church | Milwaukee, Wisconsin  
July 3, 2022  
Luke 10:1-11

I began trying to figure out how I was going to preach this text from the Gospel early in the week, how to speak about Jesus' sending 70 emissaries to prepare his way. And I was really struggling because there's a lot going on in the text and I was trying to find something truly prophetic. As is the case with everything I say from the pulpit, I check in with my wife, Fiona. And this week, in a particularly playful mood, she told me not to worry about it. I asked, alright well what would you preach on. "Oh, I don't know, resiliency and taking chances. Then quote Wayne Gretzky saying, "You miss 100 percent of the shots you don't take."

Now to be clear, 1) in addition to being very Scottish, she is by virtue of immigration, very Canadian. So hence the Wayne Gretzky. And 2) she was definitely messing with me. Unfortunately, I have a tendency to analyze everything so I began thinking... Resiliency. Taking chances... Wayne Gretzky.

The fact is that despite her overt shenanigans to play with me, Fiona wasn't entirely wrong on the themes. The Gospel story is, amongst other things, about taking chances and it is about resiliency.

To recap, Jesus sends 70 of his followers ahead of him to places he intends to visit on the way to Jerusalem. And from the get-go, he acknowledges that his followers will not always be welcomed. This then is where taking chances, taking your shot, the wisdom of my wife and Wayne Gretzky does come into play. Jesus tells his followers to stop and either they will be welcomed or they will not. They are to go in total vulnerability, dependent on only one another and the households they encounter.

And that vulnerability feels so incredibly relatable. Imagine those moments in which you wanted to share something in total vulnerability. And I'll start by asking you to think of those times when what you shared was rejected. The rejection might have been out of another person's malice, it might have been simply because of a lack of agreement or understanding. I imagine that whatever you felt would not be terribly unlike what the 70 followers encountered as they sought to spread the good news.

I know that I have sought to share something of myself in the past which has not been received in the way I had hoped. Jokes that fell flat, a personal experience that was not received as I had hoped, a bid for relationship rejected. And I know that at times to be rejected in such a fashion can hurt.

Yet this is the cost of taking the chance at relationship; it is not always accepted. This is why I am grateful that Jesus says that if others do not share in your peace, it will return to you. I do

think that Jesus calls us to resiliency and an assurance that we need not hold the rejection of others any longer than we need to. And there is the assurance that our peace will return to us. That even though we may be hurt by rejection, that hurt will not always be with us.

The risk of taking a chance with relationship is rejection, but Jesus also assures us that there will always be those who accept us as well. There will be those who see us for who we are, who will feel loved by us and in turn give us rest and a sense of home. I honestly could speak to some experience with the majority of folks at St. Mark's at this point, but there are a couple of guys here who made me feel welcome out of nowhere. As it so happens, I'm a huge heavy metal fan, the best gift my wife's ever gotten me I think was tickets to see Iron Maiden right before the pandemic hit. And I'll note that heavy metal isn't exactly what I usually associate with church membership. Nevertheless, there have been those at St. Mark's who have talked with me about this music I love so much yet I had feared would not necessarily find welcome in a church. The more profound elements of our lives may find rest in others when we are vulnerable too. Surely there are parents who mutually understand the feeling of caring for a child crying at 2 am, spouses who have experienced the loss of their partner who may share grief with one another, aspirants of justice for the sick, the hungry, and impoverished who collaborate joyfully to give to others.

Even without shared experience, when we seek rest and a sense of home with one another for our lives, for our hopes and fears, even though we may sometimes find hurt or even rejection, so often we will find acceptance and nourishment; a sense of community that understands and lives out the good news of God's love.

I am enthralled by Jesus' command this morning because it speaks both to the risk of human relationship and of the church's mission to love others and the rewards. It speaks also to the reality that regardless of how we are accepted or rejected over the course of our lives, "the Kingdom of God draws near."

Ruefully I concede that Fiona's echoed wisdom from Wayne Gretzky, "that we miss 100% of the shots we don't take" holds truth in relation to our Gospel. Jesus invites us to the risk of relationship; to the risk of offering ourselves sincerely, vulnerably, equipped with nothing more than ourselves. He invites us knowing that even though we will face pain, even though we will face the disruption of our peace, we will find community. We will find commonality and love. We will draw close to the kingdom of God. Amen.