

The Lord appointed seventy-two others whom he sent ahead of him in pairs to every town and place he intended to visit. The seventy-two returned rejoicing, and said, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us because of your name." Words from our Gospel today from the 10th chapter of the Gospel according to Luke; sisters and brothers, may the Lord give to you his peace and his joy.

As a Boy Scout growing up, one of the great adventures I was able to participate in was going to Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico. It is a renowned backpacking destination. Now there are different versions of camping – on the high end of things, for some people this means a hotel without room service. There is the glamping of an RV or trailer. Then in the middle is a cabin in the woods, then tent camping, with access to various amenities here and there. Finally, for the hardcore campers among us, there is backpacking. It's only coming with you if it fits in the backpack – that means clothes, tent, all your food, water, cooking supplies, hygiene items, sleeping bag, and whatever else you need for your trip. I suppose there is also those shows where someone is dropped into the middle of nowhere with nothing but the clothes on their back, but that's another story. Philmont was a Backpacking destination – so if you can't fit it in your backpack it's not coming, and remember you have to carry these things from place to place, so what is an ounce in the morning will feel like a pound in the evening; lighter is better. You have to make decisions as to how important something is and prioritize whether or not it is worth taking. Ideally, we would take it all, and society says that you can... but we are limited human beings and at some point, there is no more room in the backpack, there is too much weight to be carried. This is life. We only have so much time. We only have so much energy. We only have so many resources. Everything else become baggage. You definitely want to be careful of the baggage that you are carrying around with you.

In some respects that is what Jesus has been talking about these past couple of weeks with these readings... Baggage. He's challenging us to re-consider those things that are unwieldy and serve as an extra weight on our shoulders as we make our way through life. It was shared in the Gospel last week that Jesus resolutely determined to travel to Jerusalem, and he called upon his disciples to follow him in making this journey. If you remember, there were also a lot of excuses offered as to avoid making this trip together with him. The disciples would say, "I will follow you into glory, but... but I don't want to sacrifice or commitment... but first let me do this... but let's stop to take our vengeance on the ungrateful Samaritans" – All these folks were carrying around baggage that made following Jesus difficult. We resonate with and understand this kind of baggage. Every time we complain (or want to complain) about work, or something that happened in the family, or those times when something ticked us off, or someone hurt us, or those times where we had to put our own needs and wants on the backburner, we are acknowledging our baggage. We are acknowledging that I shouldn't have to be dealing with this right now. We are essentially saying, I don't want to carry around this physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, weight. We are at a threshold where we have to decide if these things are worth it are baggage – something that we put up with and keep in our backpack or remove this hassle from our lives.

This week's Gospel talks about baggage too. Jesus asks us to carry around no money bag, no sack, no sandals. The warning here is that our possessions can possess us. We obsess over things, what we will wear, that new tractor or car we want, the renovation we've been saving up for, a computer, tv, smartphone. These things don't make us happy of themselves. We are left wanting more and because of excessive advertising we feel like we are still missing out. They become baggage. Today, Jesus tells us to greet no one along the way. I understand this to mean don't get sidetracked. How often do we get sidetracked from what we know we should be doing when we instead get sucked into our time in front of the TV or scrolling through Internet Pages and YouTube Videos? We get sidetracked texting someone else instead of being present to the people in front of us at the dinner table. We end up greeting a lot of people along the way. Such things end up becoming baggage. There is also the baggage of shallow pride. The 72 disciples come back rejoicing today because of their exercise of authority over evil. Jesus acknowledges their work, but their mission was not meant to make them powerful, but to effect salvation for themselves and others. "This is what should make us proud," says St. Paul in the 2nd reading, "that we boast in the cross of Christ, by which we leave the baggage of the world behind and know freedom from sin and death." Pride and power can become baggage. What are we do with all this baggage?

All of us have different things we are dealing with even if nobody knows anything about them, and all of us are in a different part of our respective journey of life and of faith. And yet there is a message of hope for all of us here. Let's take stock of our own backpacks: For those who are carrying around significant baggage, Jesus proclaims through the lips of the disciples: "the Kingdom of God is at hand." What does this mean? It means there is peace in the midst of these troubles; it means that healing is possible; it means that evils are kept at bay in the reign of Jesus' Kingdom. The invitation to you is this: "Come and see what a life free from baggage is about." For those looking to respond to Jesus' call to follow him on his journey to Jerusalem, to follow him in their own lives by becoming his disciples, the message today is one of integrity so as to become a personal witness to this baggage-free life. You've gotten rid of the baggage, so don't fill up your backpack with more. You don't need money or sandals, don't get sidetracked with other people or false promises, learn to trust in God and things will be taken care of. To those whose heart is so converted to Christ, you know that you have Good News to share. Jesus empowers you to go before him and sends you to a given community with your name on it: your work, your home, your social circles... God has a great purpose for your life, and this work will fill you with joy as it did for the disciples who returned rejoicing. Lastly, for those who have been rejected by the world on account of their faith - because make no mistake, Jesus is sending you like a lamb among wolves - there is a message of comfort that justice will be served and that your name is written in heaven. You can lay down the baggage of fear and weariness... So, where are you at in your faith journey? What message most resonates with you: Come and see? Follow me? Go to the villages? Your name is written in heaven? What can you let go of? What baggage are you carrying around that is preventing you from going forward and backpacking with Jesus through life? How can you take that next step in faith? How can Jesus help?

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 102

Reading 1

Is 66:10-14c

Thus says the LORD:

Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad because of her,
all you who love her;
exult, exult with her,
all you who were mourning over her!
Oh, that you may suck fully
of the milk of her comfort,
that you may nurse with delight
at her abundant breasts!

For thus says the LORD:

Lo, I will spread prosperity over Jerusalem like a river,
and the wealth of the nations like an overflowing torrent.
As nurslings, you shall be carried in her arms,
and fondled in her lap;
as a mother comforts her child,
so will I comfort you;
in Jerusalem you shall find your comfort.

When you see this, your heart shall rejoice
and your bodies flourish like the grass;
the LORD's power shall be known to his servants.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 66:1-3, 4-5, 6-7, 16, 20

R. (1) Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.

Shout joyfully to God, all the earth,
sing praise to the glory of his name;
proclaim his glorious praise.

Say to God, "How tremendous are your deeds!"

R. Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.

"Let all on earth worship and sing praise to you,
sing praise to your name!"

Come and see the works of God,
his tremendous deeds among the children of Adam.

R. Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.

He has changed the sea into dry land;
through the river they passed on foot;

therefore let us rejoice in him.

He rules by his might forever.

R. Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.

Hear now, all you who fear God, while I declare
what he has done for me.

Blessed be God who refused me not
my prayer or his kindness!

R. Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.

Reading 2

Gal 6:14-18

Brothers and sisters:

May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,
through which the world has been crucified to me,
and I to the world.

For neither does circumcision mean anything, nor does uncircumcision,
but only a new creation.

Peace and mercy be to all who follow this rule
and to the Israel of God.

From now on, let no one make troubles for me;
for I bear the marks of Jesus on my body.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit,
brothers and sisters. Amen.

Alleluia

Col 3:15a, 16a

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Let the peace of Christ control your hearts;
let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Lk 10:1-12, 17-20

At that time the Lord appointed seventy-two others
whom he sent ahead of him in pairs
to every town and place he intended to visit.

He said to them,

"The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few;
so ask the master of the harvest
to send out laborers for his harvest.

Go on your way;

behold, I am sending you like lambs among wolves.

Carry no money bag, no sack, no sandals;

and greet no one along the way.
Into whatever house you enter, first say,
'Peace to this household.'
If a peaceful person lives there,
your peace will rest on him;
but if not, it will return to you.
Stay in the same house and eat and drink what is offered to you,
for the laborer deserves his payment.
Do not move about from one house to another.
Whatever town you enter and they welcome you,
eat what is set before you,
cure the sick in it and say to them,
'The kingdom of God is at hand for you.'
Whatever town you enter and they do not receive you,
go out into the streets and say,
'The dust of your town that clings to our feet,
even that we shake off against you.'
Yet know this: the kingdom of God is at hand.
I tell you,
it will be more tolerable for Sodom on that day than for that town."

The seventy-two returned rejoicing, and said,
"Lord, even the demons are subject to us because of your name."
Jesus said, "I have observed Satan fall like lightning from the sky.
Behold, I have given you the power to 'tread upon serpents' and scorpions
and upon the full force of the enemy and nothing will harm you.
Nevertheless, do not rejoice because the spirits are subject to you,
but rejoice because your names are written in heaven."

or

Lk 10:1-9

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