

AROUND THE CORNER

Order of Service (bulletin)

<https://www.spiritofhope.ca/news-and-events>

Video (recorded live stream)

<https://www.youtube.com/@spiritofhopeunitedchurch791>

June 14, 2026

Pentecost 3

Matthew 9:35 - 10:14

Jesus continued touring all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the Good news of God's reign and curing all kinds of diseases and sicknesses. At the sight of the crowds, Jesus' heart was moved with pity because they were distressed and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd. Jesus said to disciples, "The harvest is bountiful, but the labourers are few. Beg the overseer of the harvest to send labourers out to bring in the crops." Jesus summoned the Twelve, and gave them authority to expel unclean spirits and heal sickness and diseases of all kinds. These are the names of the twelve apostles: the first were Simon, nicknamed Peter — that is, "Rock" — and his brother Andrew; then James, ben-Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas, Matthew, the tax collector; James, ben-Alphaeus; Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot; and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus. These twelve Jesus sent out after giving them the following instructions: "Don't visit Gentile regions, and don't enter a Samaritan town. Go instead to the lost sheep of the House of Israel. As you go, make this proclamation: *The reign of heaven has drawn near*. Heal those who are sick, raise the dead, cure leprosy, expel demons. You received freely — now freely give. Take neither gold nor silver nor copper for your money belts — no traveling bag, no change of clothes, no sandals, no walking staff — for workers deserve their keep. Look for worthy people in whatever town or village you come to, and stay with them until you leave. As you enter a house, bless it. If the home is deserving, your peace will descend on it. If it isn't, your peace will return to you. If anyone does not receive you or listen to what you have to say, leave that house or town and, once outside it, shake its dust from your feet."



Star Wars Episode One, The Phantom Menace. Jedi's Obi-Wan Kenobi and his master Qui-Gon Jinn seek the help of the Gungan people to get to Theed, the capital city of Naboo and the home of Queen Amidala.

Boss Nass, the leader of the Gungans, says *the fastest way is through the planet core*. So guided by Jar Jar Binks, the Jedi navigate the watery depths of the planet. Of course, the power in their transport goes out. They vigorously worked to turn the power back on. And soon as it turns back on and the lights shine out again, there is a giant gobberfish staring at them, ready to attack. And then just as the gobberfish is about ready to bite their ship, another monster comes by and eats it." And Qui-Gon very calmly says, "There's always a bigger fish." That's very indicative of a common attitude of Jedi Master Qui-Gon Jinn. When they found that the money that they had didn't spend on a certain planet and they needed parts to repair their ship, Qui-Gon simply says, "I'm sure that another opportunity will present itself."

In the reading today, Jesus and the disciples are on what we might call a healing road trip. And it says pretty

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clearly that Jesus' motive is compassion. Jesus sees people who in the language of our reading this morning are *distressed* and *dejected*. The New Revised Standard Version says the people were *harassed and helpless*. In one particular direct Greek translation, that I saw this week, chose *wearied and cast away*. Usually we can think of those in the opposite order. They are being rejected or cast away or they're being harassed and therefore they feel distressed or helpless or wearied.

It seems that in every town that Jesus entered on his journeys, he encountered people who were vulnerable. Yes, people with illnesses: people who were suffering from all manners of distress, physical and mental, but more so Jesus saw people who, because often of their illness, found themselves isolated or rejected or marginalized, distressed, harassed, worried, dejected, helpless, cast away. Healing would not only be about restoring their physical or their mental health, but would also enable them to enjoy fuller community - to reverse the isolation, not just the disease.

I'm not sure things have really changed all that much. I see it every day. I'm sure most of you do as well when you're out and about or if you're watching or reading the news or checking out social media. Distress and dejection is everywhere.

We're in the middle of Pride Month 2026 and every year some people get on their public hobby horses and say, "Why do we have pride?" And if you're a social media person, just spend two seconds in the comment section of any business or organization's pro-pride post and you'll see the attitudes that continue to cause distress and dejection. In a way, all these people are saying why we need pride.

In the debate over whether to stay in Canada or leave, one particular person that I see every once in a while on social media is hawking t-shirts with a provincial flag and the words, "This is my pride flag." Now, if you challenge them, you would get the response, *I'm just being patriotic to the place I live. I'm not saying anything against uh, the LGBTQIA plus or two-spirited communities*. But again, spend two seconds in the comments section of those buy my t-shirts posts and you'll see that a lot of the people think that, in the Republic of Alberta, we won't have to worry about rainbows anymore, so to speak.

And it's this kind of uncertainty in our society that makes the months and the years to come stressful for people.

Forcing all people who are but the most severe and obvious to the eyes cases forcing them off of Alberta's disability social support program (AISH) and onto the lower benefits of the Alberta Disability Assistance Program (ADAP)... the *if disabled people want more money, they can get a job* plan. It's very stressful for some of our communities that are most vulnerable. And I'm just going to say his name, [Bruce Johnson](#). If you know, you know. If you don't know, talk to me after church.

Add to that *all of us* are still living alongside that with general economic uncertainty almost exclusively caused by conscious choices of a neighboring nation. Tariffs affecting global trade. The impact of the war in Iran disrupting the Persian Gulf's supply traffic. But hey, there's a big UFC fight this evening, so enjoy that.

There are so many needs. How do we fix them? We can feel dejected and helpless and weary.

Jesus saw the needs that resulted from the sometimes systemic dejections and distress in his communities and he saw that it was beyond his ability to deal with on his own. And so he trains and he encourages his 12 main followers to take a more on the ground leadership role. And Jesus knows that even this is only going to

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scratch the surface. So Jesus already limits what he expects them to try and accomplish.

He starts off by saying,

- Well, let's stay close to home, okay? Let's not try to bite off more than we can chew yet. So don't bother going into Samaritan towns or Gentile towns yet. Let's stick close to home. Let's stick with the people of Galilee and Judea.
- Let's travel light so you don't have to worry about being as tired when you get there because you won't have as much luggage with you. That means you're going to have to trust that you will be given your daily bread: that another opportunity will present itself.

And then as we heard today, Jesus says

- Let's put our energy into communities that are open to what we offer and not spend a lot of time arguing with people who would rather us be something different than we are.

Shake off that dust. It does kind of sound like a very visible statement of rejection. You know, you want them to know you're rejecting them. It sounds very judgmental - that you are unworthy of me. And fair enough, you know, if we read one more verse that's pretty much what the text says. *The truth is on judgment day it will be easier for towns like Sodom and Gomorrah than it will be for that town.* Jesus warns the disciples that yes, some places may just say *no thank you* politely, but there are going to be others who are extremely upset with what you're doing and why you're doing it. In fact, it says that in some places people will arrest you and haul you into court and they might even beat you out in public. Jesus' metaphor was, "I am sending you like sheep among wolves."

Advocating and working for the restoration of the vulnerable and the rejected will rub some people the wrong way, particularly people whose lives benefit from some being pushed to the edges. Jesus says, "Be prepared for that."

I love the next line. He says, "Be clever as serpents." You know, be clever, but don't lose your innocence. Don't get jaded by it. Keep your focus on what you can do. Move on.

Now, I accept the biblical reality that that phrase, *shake off the dust of your feet*, is a statement to insult those unwelcoming towns. But I like what is kind of implied in Jesus' later statements: put your energy where it might make some difference. move toward the new possible opportunity to live out the compassion and make a good difference along your way.

I think I get a little bit about what Jesus might have meant when he spoke about a woman who had anointed him with expensive perfume in the Bethany home of Simon the leper: a story that's told later in the book of Matthew. And Jesus responds to the complaints by saying, "The poor you will always have with you." Which sometimes sounds like, "Ah, you can't do anything about it. Let me have the fancy perfume." We always need to remember that the jar was already open and the perfume was already used. And so complaining about it was simply to put this woman in a lower place. I love the way that Tim Rice put it in the lyrics of Jesus Christ Superstar... *Surely you're not saying we have the resources to save the poor from their lot.*

Jesus constantly preaches about bringing good news to the poor. Not that we will solve poverty with just your efforts, but that we will make a difference along the way. More opportunities are there to do good in this world. No matter how extensive, how intense, how much work it takes for all of our efforts, there is always going to be valuable work that we could have done if we had more time, more people, more resources. And if not at this time, we know that good, valuable opportunities are going to present themselves as we move through the day.

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Shake the dust off is saying that our energy and our time and our resources are always limited.

As tempting as it is sometimes, it may not always be the best use of what is available to us to argue with those who don't like what we're doing, those who oppose our efforts to spend our time – trying to soften those particular hard hearts. Jesus says that's not as important as moving on to the next town. There's always a bigger fish.

This past week, I was looking to find a date for an event here at the church. And I started looking through the church calendar of all the confirmed events. I was thinking about a Sunday afternoon. And then I realized that there were absolutely no Sunday afternoons available in September or October. Either things were happening right after church and so putting another event after that would be adding a lot to people's plates. Or there was maybe a little window after church, but then in the middle of the afternoon something else is starting and do you want to add something in the middle of that sandwich? Now, I think my event would be selfishly a good fit, but the capacity to make it happen on a Sunday afternoon just is not there.

Not every need can be met by any one individual or even one group of committed people. ***But our efforts do meet needs.*** Even if there are other things that are left for others or for another time, good and valuable work is always ***not*** going to be done by us.

I said it a few weeks ago, the most that we can expect of ourselves individually and as a church is to do the best we can with what we've got. And I think even more specifically: put our focus on what's most impactful, what makes the biggest difference when we have to choose. And that doesn't necessarily mean it's going to be the easiest thing to do. Jesus' group of 12 had to do the best they could with what they had. And that meant that sometimes they had to shake the dust off and go and make a difference somewhere else. In Luke's gospel, Jesus sends out 36 pairs of workers with a similar mandate. And surely even that group of 72 couldn't do it all.

And so I think that part of the encouragement from today's scripture is to appreciate and to celebrate what we're able to do and not disappoint ourselves with what we have yet to do or couldn't get to. I think an encouragement from this scripture today is that advocacy is inefficient when we fall into the traps of getting into arguments and confrontations. When our energy might be in making some lives just a little better, including our own. Every small good is a great thing.

The key motivator behind all of this good work and bringing healing and support into the lives of others is compassion. I actually prefer "compassion" as a translation than what the Inclusive Bible used today: "pity". I know they're similar but pity (to me) has this image of hierarchy. I pity you. You're lower than me. Whereas compassion seems to be more *along side*.

Jesus was moved by compassion, seeing people's distress and dejection.

The truth is that kind hearts feel what others feel. Compassion moves us to where we need to be next and what opportunities will emerge there. Doing the work of honestly understanding each other will lead us to what can be done to be able to live out the compassion of Jesus' way. There will always be great work to do just around that corner. Amen.

#639VU One More Step

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