

WHICH IS IT?

Order of Service (bulletin)

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

Video (recorded live stream)

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

July 6, 2025

Pentecost 4

Galatians 6:1-11

Sisters and brothers, if one of you is caught in any sin, the more spiritual among you should correct the offender in a spirit of gentleness – remembering that you may be tempted yourselves. Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ. But if you think you are important when you are not, you are deceiving yourself. Examine your own work, each of you. If you find something to boast about, at least it's something of your own and not just empty comparison with your neighbour. Carry your own load! Those under instruction in the word should always contribute to the support of the instructor. Don't be deceived – God cannot be cheated: where you sow, there you will reap. If you sow in the field of self-indulgence, you will reap corruption. If you sow in the field of the Spirit, you will reap the harvest of eternal life. Never grow tired of doing good. We will reap a harvest at the proper time – if we don't grow weary. So, while we still have time, for good to all and especially to those of the household of faith. Look how big these letters are when I write to you in my own hand!

Luke 10:1-11

After this, Jesus appointed seventy-two others, and sent them on ahead in pairs to every town and place he intended to visit. He said to them, "The harvest is rich, but the workers are few; therefore, ask the overseer to send workers to the harvest. "Be on your way, and remember: I am sending you as lambs in the midst of wolves. Don't carry a walking stick or knapsack; wear no sandals and greet no one along the way. And whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be upon this house!' If the people live peaceably there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will come back to you. Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you, for the labourer is worth a wage. Don't keep moving from house to house. "And whatever city you enter, after they welcome you, eat what they set before you and heal those who are sick in that town. Say to them, 'The reign of God has drawn near to you.' If the people of any town you enter don't welcome you, go into its streets and say, 'We shake the dust of this town from our feet as testimony against you. But know that the reign of God has drawn near.'

(prayer)

BRIDGEKEEPER: >

Stop! Who would cross the Bridge of Death must answer me these questions three, ere the other side he see.

LANCELOT: <

Ask me the questions, bridgekeeper. I am not afraid.

BRIDGEKEEPER:

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What... is your name?

LANCELOT:
My name is 'Sir Lancelot of Camelot'.

BRIDGEKEEPER:
What... is your quest?

LANCELOT:
To seek the Holy Grail.

BRIDGEKEEPER:
What... is your favorite color?

LANCELOT:
Blue.

BRIDGEKEEPER:
Right. Off you go.

LANCELOT:
Oh, thank you. Thank you very much.

ROBIN:
That's easy!

BRIDGEKEEPER:
Stop! Who approacheth the Bridge of Death must answer me these questions three, ere the other side he see.

ROBIN:
Ask me the questions, bridgekeeper. I'm not afraid.

BRIDGEKEEPER:
What... is your name?

ROBIN:
'Sir Robin of Camelot'.

BRIDGEKEEPER:
What... is your quest?

ROBIN:
To seek the Holy Grail.

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BRIDGEKEEPER:
What... is the capital of Assyria?

ROBIN:
I don't know that! Auuuuuuuugh!

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Of course, King Arthur of the Britains eventually got the best of the bridgekeeper

- by answering one of the questions with a question that the bridgekeeper couldn't answer

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But my favorite exchange in that [scene](#) from *Monty Python's In Search of the Holy Grail* involved Sir Galahad who got the same easy questions as Sir Lancelot

- but changed his mind on his favorite colour mid-answer
 - *What... is your favorite color?*
 - *Blue. No, yel-- auuuuuuuugh!*

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Both of today's scripture readings invite us to think about the complex web of choices that we navigate throughout our lives

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As the current [phases](#) of the Marvel Cinematic Universe remind us

- each choice that is made affects what possibilities can exist down the road

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Jesus got the point where he saw greater possibilities to spread his good news if the efforts were split up

- he would send people on ahead to vet which places were going to be receptive to the message

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The metaphor that Jesus drew on was the practice of landowners hiring seasonal workers during harvest to reduce the amount of time it takes to bring in the crops

- My metaphor is...
- the doctor when my spouse was in labour ready to give birth
 - all of the hours of prep work was done by the nurses and other staff
 - the obstetrician showed up at the last minute to catch the kid before it hit the ground

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The story goes that Jesus sent people off in three dozen directions

- and he made some choices early on that affected how the disciples would go about doing this work

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First, they were sent out in pairs

- this might accomplish a couple of things:
 - there can be safety in numbers
 - Jesus implied by saying they were like lambs walking among wolves

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- and two people can provide mutual support and accountability for the tasks

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Secondly, Jesus limited the supplies they would bring:

- *Don't carry a walking stick or knapsack and wear no sandals.*
 - No walking stick and no sandals? That could definitely affect how far you could travel at any given stretch
 - Jesus was most certainly encouraging them to make stops at the earliest opportunity
 - No knapsack? So, they wouldn't be able to carry any spare food or blankets
 - A chapter earlier in Luke, when Jesus sent out his twelve closest disciples, he set similar limits: *Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money - not even an extra tunic*
 - Jesus most certainly wanted them to find people willing to give them meals and lodging

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Jesus actually makes this intention explicitly clear

- *If you are welcomed into a home; stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you.*
- *And use it as a base to minister to the whole town.*
- *But if you enter a town where no one welcomes you...*
 - *just clean your feet and move on.*
- *Put your effort into the places of welcome.*

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There are themes of hope, trust, and using one's energy wisely in this passage

- ***focus your time and effort into making a difference***

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In the letter to the Galatians, Paul also invites people to choose where their time and energy is most needed

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In doing so, he makes two (seemingly) contradictory statements:

- *Bear one another's burdens, and...*
- *Carry your own load*

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So... **which is it**, Paul?

- Are we to *carry our own loads* or *have others bear them*?

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Allow me to take a closer look at how Paul sees this oxymoron playing out.

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The first thing I notice is that Paul starts the conversation with:

- *if one of you is caught in sin...*

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In Paul's hebrew tradition and upbringing, "sin" meant something quite specific

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- someone had breached one of the tenants of the Torah/law
 - Or in the course of normal living, they had become ritually unclean
- And... the Torah also laid out specific actions and remedies that atoned for specific sins/uncleanliness

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But, earlier in this letter, Paul had already argued that (in Christ), they are no longer subjugated by the Hebrew Law

- Paul certainly argued that non-Jewish members of the church did not, now, have to start following the Torah
 - even for early Christians with the same religious background as Paul, faithfulness to the Torah was not to be the centre of one's spirituality
 - for all of the early Christians, it was faith in Christ Jesus that mattered
- In fact, as Paul wrote earlier in the letter, *in Christ, there is distinction between gentile or jew*

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In this diverse, emerging, evolving church...

- "sin" was not so much a violation of any written law
- but a more ethereal breach of their faithfulness in Christ that bound the community of believers

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Paul's concern was broken relationships between people and their God

- and people and their community

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In today's passage, the remedy for the sin was not a prescribed ritual or prayer required of the sinner...

- but, instead, having other members of the community (particularly those who had their spiritual *stuff* together) assist the person find a path back to faithfulness

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Bearing one another's burdens is a statement that, in the community of Christ Jesus,

- we don't let people languish alone in crises of faith

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As Paul wrote in a different letter (1Cor12:26)...

- *when one part of the body suffers, the whole body suffers*
- *just as the whole rejoices in a single part's joy*

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It is this mutual compassion that the theme of mutual responsibility comes into Paul's treatise

- the whole is the sum of its parts
- when one part is not living into its fullest potential,
 - the whole community is affected

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When a crisis of faith is at the core of the brokenness... *bearing one another's burdens* is needed

- but when selfishness or arrogance or entitlement or laziness is the disfunction
 - the remedy is to expect that each person will do what they are capable of doing
 - *carry your own load*

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I am sure that Jesus' two by two model required this balance as well

- the pair could be a support each other along the way
- but that included each one living into their skills and responsibilities as well
- so that the two worked as a team, not one person riding the other's cloak-tails

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In the new pandemic-gone-wild movie (third in a series) [28 Years Later](#)...

- we are introduced to a survivor community on the tidal island of Lindisfarne
 - who, thanks to their geography, are *mostly* isolated from those infected by the rage virus who still dominate mainland Britain
- We see that the people of Lindisfarne have a community supply shack where unneeded, but still usable items could be left
- and where what is in there can be free for the taking
 - but there is a sign that says
 - *take only what you need, supplies are scarce*
- It is an example of both *bearing other's burdens* and *carrying your own load* at the same time

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In the modern experience we still live on both sides of this line

- and seek the most workable balance

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Neither the models of

- everyone fending for themselves, or
- expecting every difficulty to fixed by someone else

is the solution to 100% of the situations.

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In the modern experience we still live on both sides of this line

- As they did in Paul's time,
 - in the modern church community,
 - we still live on both sides of this line

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Sin (as it was beginning to be understood in the New Testament time) was...

- words and actions that get in the way of a good and healthy relationship
 - that we might have with our God
 - and with the rest of our community.

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The response to sin within the early church (and I think still today) is...

- to seek to restore and improve and recreate healthy relationships...
- And to seek to do this (not through judgmentalism or accusation) but through a spirit of gentleness.

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Paul was clear to point out that the early Christian community was to see itself as a mutual support society.

- *Remember that you might be tempted yourself, so bear one another's burdens.*

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In a different letter [to the Romans], Paul spoke of having responsibility within a freedom in Christ.

- We see something similar here in this Galatians letter.
- If you think that you are so important that you are above these kind of concerns
 - you are kidding yourself
 - because *there (but for the grace of God) go I.*

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And so there are times within the community of faith

- that our responsibility will be to live out our best ability,
- meaning that we need to carry our share of the load when we are able.

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But when we need to right the relationships we have with each other and with our God

- we can rely on the support of the community
 - assured that we will be met, not with condemnation, and judgment,
 - but with support and forgiveness.

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Paul wanted the focus to be on healthy relationships and healthy community

- to focus on what is needed and is possible

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With the instructions to the seventy-two missionaries

- Jesus also wanted the focus to be on what builds positive relationships

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We are inheritors of this approach

- And so we seek to serve and be served
- to love and be loved
- to support and be supported

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Along the way, we will seek to find the balance between

- carrying our share of the load and
- bearing each other's burdens.

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Let us pray:

O Spirit, grant that I may never seek so much to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, and to be loved as to love with all my soul. Amen

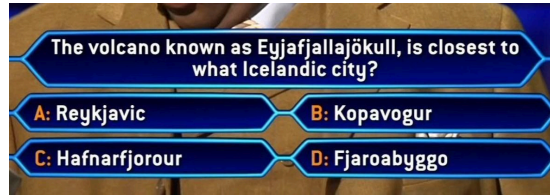
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// epilogue //

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To ease any burden you might be feeling about the answer to the question on the screen... so **which is it?**



- Well, Fjarðabyggð is definitely the furthest away
- The other three are basically neighbours, and depending on where you start within each city, you could make a case for any of them being the closest
 - but... if you count from the nearest edge of their city limits, Reykjavík is probably a few kilometers closer

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It is not always easy to know exactly what is needed in each moment

- But always striving for the gentle spirit to brings us together

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#299VU Teach Me God To Wonder