

Session Three: March 10

BLESS: Share faith and unselfishly give and serve

“Freely you have received; freely give.” – Matthew 10:8

Celebrant: Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

People: We will, with God’s help.

– Book of Common Prayer, 305

Jesus called his disciples to give, forgive, teach, and heal in his name. We are empowered by the Spirit to bless everyone we meet, practicing generosity and compassion and proclaiming the Good News of God in Christ with hopeful words and selfless actions. We can share our stories of blessing and invite others to the Way of Love.

Pete’s Comments. *I think the idea of blessing involves more than generosity and compassion, although they are certainly essential. Blessing itself (Latin: bene-dicta, good words) is approval, the pronouncement of favor, often from a power higher than the person doing the blessing. Here, the intent is to use the word as a verb, to bless the people in one’s daily life and encounters. I see two basic ways of doing this: to bless the people around us with words and deeds, which is what I think this session is getting at, and also for one’s very life to be a blessing for others. The trick is to approach each person or encounter with the question, “How can I be a blessing for this person?”*

For Reflection and Discernment

- What are the ways the Spirit is calling you to bless others?
- How will (or does) blessing others – through sharing your resources, faith, and story – become part of your daily life?
- Who will join you in committing to the practice of blessing others?

Pete’s Questions. *Instead of questions for this, I am imagining scenarios in which we have the power to confer or withhold blessings.*

Scenario 1. *You have been waiting patiently for a car to pull out of a space in an overcrowded parking lot. Just as the car pulls out, another car pulls in from the opposite direction. How might you withhold a blessing from that driver? How might you confer a blessing upon him or her?*

Scenario 2. *You entrust a close friend with a deeply personal information, which the friend shares on social media asking for “thoughts and prayers” on your behalf. How do you begin to find ways to bless not only your friend, but the countless people who are now sending you their thoughts and prayers?*

Scenario 3. *Reverse Scenario 2. You are the concerned friend who alerted the world about your friend’s misfortune. You had no idea the friend wanted it kept private, and now your friend is furious with you. How do you bless the friend?*

Scenario 4. *A person you know and enjoy has told you he has been asked to serve on the vestry. While you like this person, you know that he/she is vastly unsuited for the job. Both the person and the vestry will suffer. How might you “be a blessing” in this case?*

Scenario 5. *You wake up with the doldrums. You have nothing that absolutely must be done today, and you are suddenly filled with boredom and discontent. How do you find a blessing in that?*

GO: Cross boundaries, listen deeply and live like Jesus

*Jesus said to them, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." – John 20:21
Send them into the world in witness to your love. – Book of Common Prayer, 306*

As Jesus went to the highways and byways, he sends us beyond our circles and comfort, to witness to the love, justice, and truth of God with our lips and with our lives. We go to listen with humility and to join God in healing a hurting world. We go to become Beloved Community, a people reconciled in love with God and one another.

***Pete's Comments.** I guess the above is the "short form" of the explanation of "Go." First, and most importantly, we should recognize that "Go" is God's very favorite word in the entire Old Testament. God told Abraham to "Go to the place I will show you;" God told Moses to "Go to Pharaoh and say..." God told Elijah (you knew I'd get him in there!!) to "Go to the land of Zarahemla..." and so forth. Just as Jesus sends the Eleven out on John 20, He sends them out in Matthew 28, saying, "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations..." Additionally, and this could be a discussion question, do we "go out" to become the Beloved Community? Or does community, like charity, begin at home? Do we not first find community with our Creator and then with the people our Creator has entrusted to us?*

For Reflection and Discernment

- To what new places or communities is the Spirit sending you to witness to the love, justice, and truth of God?
- How will you build into your life a commitment to cross boundaries, listen carefully, and take part in healing and reconciling what is broken in this world?
- With whom will you share in the commitment to go forth as a reconciler and healer?

Pete's Questions

1. *We've seen how God tells everyone where to go, and often, what to do. Looking back on your life, can you think of a time when God told you to go somewhere?*
2. *One of the worst things that can (and does) happen at large-scale disaster sites is an influx of volunteers wanting to help. They are uncredentialed (therefore unvetted for security), unassigned by the leaders of the response, and untrained in safety and unskilled in response efforts. They almost always do much more harm than good, their intentions notwithstanding. How do you discern in your own life, when you are responding to the Call of God as opposed to your own good intentions to "help" in any way you can?*
3. *In a story close to my heart, Elijah (there he is again!!) is running for his life from Ahab and Jezebel, and he hides in a cave. God peers inside the cave and says, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" (1 Kings 19:7). Have you ever heard or imagined God asking you the same thing?*
4. *Saved the best for last: Okay, we get that we're supposed to "go." Go where, and do what?*