

Luke 10:1-12; 24:28-35
People of Peace and Dining with God
Sunday May 7th, 2017

Last Sunday I ended my message by telling you how two weeks ago, the Huddle group I lead, went to Basha's to simply pray for people as they walked by as a spiritual exercise to being open to finding People of Peace. And wow, did the Spirit show up!! **Well to find People of Peace you need to be one**; so we were handing out coupons for free coffee at the Starbucks.

In response to this people asked for prayers, people opened up in tears to share the agonies of their hearts and lives. We prayed with a first responder. We prayed with people for their health concerns who sat with us. We invited people to worship here and we did it as naturally and positively as you would talk about your favorite sports team.

Jesus was revealed in the breaking of the bread as some ate lunch with us. But also in the sharing of that holy Methodist drink... coffee!! It was amazing! This week I am sharing testimonies from that adventure, and a bit about "People of Peace Dining with God" as seen in our scripture stories today.

Here's how it went. We gathered in front of the donut section at Basha's and sat at the tables, and as soon as we finished a prayer the first person of peace showed up. A man walked in and I waved at him and said I know you from church, but don't remember your name. He said it was Paul, he got some food and came and sat with us as we began our work.

Paul truly was a person of peace because he was not put off because I didn't remember his name and we soon began chatting as he introduced himself to Mary Lou and Gerry.

La Verne showed up, who gets the evangelist of the day award, because she wasn't going to just sit there and wait for someone to come by. She took her shopping cart with sale items in it and began to do more shopping while handing out coupons for free coffee.

Here's her testimony, *'I visited with a woman who had stopped in the aisle. I told her I was from Vista Church and gave her a coupon for coffee. I also visited with a man who was eating lunch but didn't have anything to drink and offered him coffee from Vista Church.*

I then visited with a man who said the Pizza at Basha's was great. He then shared his son or daughter was getting a divorce and his granddaughter was going through her 3rd operation for a heart condition and hopefully this would take care of it. She was 17.

He said he didn't understand divorce. He and his wife had been married 43 years and his parents were married 60 years and had taken him to several different churches when he was young. I invited him to Vista and told him the service was at 10am which he liked. No getting up early. I said I would pray for him. He told me his name and said he would visit our church and then I introduced him to Pastor Fred.

The fourth person for La Verne was a woman she saw having trouble deciding which canned beans to buy. She said her son didn't like those with bacon or pork flavor. She said her mother had died recently and she was having a lot of trouble and asked if I would pray for her. We prayed right there that God would comfort her and give her confidence. It was her husband's 62nd birthday. She didn't wish coffee. She was in a hurry to get home.'

Note what was going on here. We were being **intentional** in our outreach to people. We had an **attitude** to seek those God had in mind for us, and we **acted**. As a result God lead us that day to a series of people with deep needs and hurts in their lives, and we, by our presence and prayers were able to ministry to them. We demonstrated God's love in word and deed.

In verses 5 & 6 of Luke 10 Jesus says, *"Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!' And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you."* It is from this scripture we get the concept of the "Person of Peace." This is a person who is open to the Good News of Jesus

Christ. This is a person that each and every one of us has been commissioned and sent by Jesus to meet. This is a unique person to each and every one of us that God has sent us specifically to witness to the good news of Jesus Christ through love and caring.

What I am talking about is evangelism as a team sport like Jesus did it. He sent people out by 2s or 12s or communities of 70. We witness individually by our lives and our words, but to do effective evangelism in today's world, **we need to do it as a team sport inviting people into an extended family of faith.**

A person of peace is a man or woman whom God has prepared their heart to be open to the Good News of Jesus Christ in word and deed. They will be open to your invitation to respond on the most elemental level to a social invitation, and if you know how to disciple someone, eventually to an invitation to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

A person of peace: Likes you,
Welcomes you
Serves you
Listens to you

First of all **a person of peace likes you.** And so when you like someone, **second, you welcome them into your life and you into theirs.**

Now I must say it is not me, and it is not you, that attracts these People of Peace and that they are responding to. It is the Jesus in you and in me that people respond to. It is the Holy Spirit in me and in you that people respond to because without the Holy Spirit you and I are nothing!!!! Methodists talk about this as **"Prevenient Grace"**

Now **third, a Person of Peace serves you.** What does that mean? In Jesus' day they would put you up for the night or week and feed you. In our over-committed world today, where time is the most precious commodity, this often comes down to a person spending their time with you, praying for you, or simply buying you a cup of coffee, which is what we did to find people of peace in Basha's.

We actually are surrounded by “People of Peace” and the problem is not so much identifying them, but for us approaching life with the sense of being sent to minister to them. Again we need to be **intentional, open to those whom God puts into our lives** and **act**. Here’s another testimony from our Basha’s visit that shows being open to whom God puts in our lives, being intentional, and acting.

One of our huddlers wrote, “I seldom shop at Basha’s, so I was looking for the restroom. I went the wrong way, so stopped at Wells Fargo to ask directions. Two women were sitting at the “open an account” desk. They both looked up and pointed me in the right direction.

As we chatted I said that my church group from Vista was having coffee at Starbucks and giving away coffee coupons, which I gave each of them. I asked if there was something we could pray about for them. One answered immediately with a request for prayers for clarity, for the town of Sonora AZ, which is going through some difficult times and for family members who are struggling.

The other young woman asked for prayers for her niece, who has been abused, and prayers for her two nephews who have also been abused and prayers for her grandmother.

Before I left, one of the women asked if she could pray for something for me.... Wow! She was definitely a “Person of Peace” for me. I should have invited her to my Huddle group!

*I was blessed by this experience and **realize how easy and natural it is to approach a total stranger as a disciple of God.***

Now her last statement, (repeat above) I know some are probably thinking, “Ha, no its not!” But if you have been trained and encouraged and go as a group like Jesus’ 70 did, or our huddle group did, actually it is easy and natural. It is like playing “hide and go seek” for God!

Some might think I won’t be in a Huddle if you got to go witnessing for God in Basha’s. Well by the time you are ready for this Fry’s will be

open. No, don't borrow trouble. There's lots of places and ways to make disciples and this is just one.

Carol's testimony is, 'We met at Basha's to look for "People of Peace" to invite them to have coffee, talk with them and pray with them if they were comfortable with that.'

Valerie, Cecelia, La Verne and I first talked with a young man, an Oro Valley Firefighter, who was very friendly and came over to our table. He said because he worked 24 hours on and 24 hours off, he did not get to church often, but was a member of the Church of the Nazarene. We all joined hands for a prayer before he left.

Valerie noticed a young woman ordering coffee and went over to give her a coupon. She and Valerie came over to our table and we asked her if she had anything we could pray about with her. She appeared rather "down" and said her husband just lost his job as a prison guard in Marana. She looked to be a nurse or care-giver as she mentioned having to get to a client and wore colorful scrubs. We all stood and joined in a prayer and she became tearful, so I gave her a big hug.

My feeling is that I hope we brought comfort to this young woman and caring to the young man. I did enjoy sharing my faith journey with Valerie and Cecelia and hearing theirs.'

Finale witness to share is about a man named Bob who came and sat with us as he ate his lunch and I believe in those moments together God was revealed in the breaking of bread. He was a bit cautious in terms of conversation at first, but we offered him a coupon for coffee, and then he listened in as we talked with each other about what we were doing, so he opened up.

He told me it had been the worst year of his life these past 12 months. Illness had knocked him off his feet and taking the joy out of life. He finally shared a bit about his faith and that he hadn't been in church in a long time. I felt compelled to pray for him and asked him if I

could. He stuck out his hand, and I prayed for healing for him, and he prayed for me before he left. Truly we were people of peace to each other for he listened to me as I told him what we were doing there as a church group, and I listened to him and we prayed for each other.

Did you notice in all these situations in which we prayed for people the desperate pain in their lives? Broken relationships, abused children, sickness and job loss? We are surrounded by people in need of the touch of the loving hand of God. And we are the **“70 others”** sent by Jesus to **“cure the sick who are there, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’”** You are the hands, the voice, the legs of God.

We need to do this intentionally, with the attitude we are being sent by God, putting our intent and attitude into action. You can learn how to do this in a very intentional, encouraging atmosphere in the new Huddle groups that are forming in a few weeks. If God is calling you to be involved write your name down and give it to me and please note: God already has some of you in mind, and you will be called and asked to participate for we have been doing what Jesus asked his disciples to do to **“Pray to the Lord of the harvest for more workers.”**

And if time and space do not allow you to be a part of a Huddle group know that you can still be intentional about inviting others into the ministries and missions you are involved in here from the choir to the prayer shawl ministry. And when someone wants to talk to you please listen, just listen and when moved pray.

There is something about eating and drinking with someone that opens them up as being people of peace. If you intentionally invite someone for coffee or lunch and they accept, you already know that they like you and welcome you. If you listen to each other and THEY pick up the check you will definitely know they are people of peace.

Jesus is indeed known and revealed in the breaking of the bread. Verse 24:30 reads, **“When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.”**

Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.”

It is my hope and prayer today that your eyes have been opened to the fact, that as believers in Jesus, you have been sent out by him to intentionally seek those whom he wants you to find. Christ is in that other person, that person of peace, and God is calling you to act and minister to them.

You have at Vista some programs, ministries, and events that are perfect for finding people of peace and dining with God. You have “Dinner for Six” which concludes today (without margaritas).

You have the potlucks and dinners like the UMW box lunch last week, the Hotdog roast this week and the mortgage burning BBQ in July to name a few.

Christ is calling you to **re-member** that person of peace to the body as we **remember** Jesus today in the breaking of the bread in this sacrament of Holy Communion. There are members of the Body of Christ that are missing from the table.

When the service ends Christ sends you to the people he wants you to find. Be **open** to this, **intentional** and when the Spirit calls **act**. And know if you want to be trained and encouraged in this, new huddles are forming in the next several weeks. Write your name down. Give it to me and get ready to be blessed as you are a blessing.

In Jesus’ name amen.