

Bubbles

Preparing To Leave The Bubble – Part 2

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I am getting ready to go on a journey.

I have been preparing to leave another bubble of my own building if you will, for a few months now and I am down to only 4 more months left in order to prepare.

So I have been trying to decide what to pack, I have been looking up some information on line about the weather and I have been getting a couple of shots every month or so. So that's been great.

I am going to Tarime, Tanzania in Africa with a mission team.

Tipp City UMC helps to support an orphanage in Tarime called Angel House.

We are going over there to see the children, talk with the missionaries who run the orphanage and see if there are other ways in which we might connect, might help them, and we are going to share the love of Christ and the message of salvation.

I am so excited. I am so terrified.

But I will return to that story in a few minutes.

Last week Dan was sharing with us from the book of Matthew, chapter 10 where we found Jesus with his 12 disciples, his 12 followers. These men who had lived with Jesus, laughed with Jesus, ate with him, watched as he healed people, as he preached and taught and now Jesus is preparing the 12 to go out and carry on his work. As Jesus is preparing them to leave the Bubble, he is giving them some instructions so they feel more prepared for the task at hand.

If you were here last week you know that we learned Jesus told them to:

Stay Focused

Be a People of One Message

To Aim for the hurting and disadvantaged

And to Give as if they had an endless supply.

Today we are going to pick back up in the same chapter and get a few more instructions from our Messiah and teacher Jesus.

And as I said earlier, since I am getting ready to leave as well, I can use all the instructions Jesus wants to give me.

Turn with me to Matthew 10:9-14

“Don't take any money in your money belts – no gold, silver, or even copper coins. Don't carry a traveler's bag with a change of clothes and sandals or even a walking stick. Don't hesitate to accept hospitality, because those who work deserve to be fed. Whenever you enter a city or village, search for a worthy person and stay in his home until you leave town. When you enter the home, give it your blessing. If it turns out to be a worthy home, let your blessing stand; if it is not take back the blessing. If any household or town refuses to welcome you or listen to your message, shake its dust from your feet as you leave.”

Matthew 10:9-14

First of all we see Jesus telling the disciples to not take the time to stop and pack a bunch of stuff – no money, no extra clothes or shoes, not even a walking stick - or in our case, a cell phone or computer.

In other words, Jesus says: **TRAVEL LIGHT**.

You see that one instruction right there is difficult for me – TRAVEL LIGHT?

Does that mean just one pair of shoes for me?

Now there are a few reasons Jesus tells the disciples this.

First it is because: **THE NEED IS URGENT**.

The disciples need to get going.

If we back up to the end of Matthew chapter 9 we will see Jesus telling the disciples that the **“harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.”**

If you have ever been on a farm at harvest time, you know that the need to bring it in is urgent.

When harvest is ready it needs to come in now.

And extra hands or laborers are always needed.

Here Jesus is telling the disciples and us that there are many, many people who would believe and follow Jesus – give their life to Jesus – but they need someone to tell them how –

they need someone to share their story with them of how Jesus changed their life and how he can do it for others as well.

They need you to tell them what Jesus has done for you, for your life, and what it has meant to you.

Another reason Jesus told the disciples to; **TRAVEL LIGHT**, was because he wanted them to: **DEPEND ON OTHERS**.

Jesus wanted his followers to be vulnerable and transparent to those they were going to minister to.

You know it is hard to ask someone for food or lodging and be prideful about it. Well actually it can't be done.

Jesus didn't want the disciples or us to be full of pride.

Everything Jesus did was about compassion and love.

And in the midst of compassion and love, there is no room for pride.

So if the followers of Jesus need to depend on others to help them on their journey, then they are going to be more loving and compassionate, more open and vulnerable aren't they.

And people respond in kind to that don't they?

This also served to remove any social barriers.

By removing these barriers, the people can relate to each other better, more as equals.

It is hard to lord your knowledge over someone when you need them to give you your next meal or let you sleep on their floor.

By having to depend on the people where they were visiting, by involving **the people in their ministry this way, it made the people even more eager to hear the message of the disciples.**

The disciples are bringing something with them to give to the people, they are bringing Jesus and how Jesus can change your life, give you life in fact.

In exchange for bringing the greatest gift ever, the gift of salvation, the disciples also needed a gift, the gift of food and shelter.

In the process of this exchange, the gift that everyone receives is love – the kind of love that Jesus exemplified for all his followers - then and now.

I want to just pause for a moment and ask you – Have you ever had to depend on others?

In our society where we place such value on self-sufficiency, we try to never have to depend on others don't we.

And yet we miss out on a huge gift by doing this – an amazing gift given really by God.

When I was living on my own with my 4 children, there came a time when I had no vehicle. A family from my church said - you know we have a car that we are not using right now and you are welcome to use it.

I told them that I couldn't do that. Not to mention I couldn't believe someone would offer me their car to use.

The next day they showed up with the car, plus an extra one so they could get back home.

I will confess that there was a part of me that thought I can do fine on my own. But there was also a part of me that had never seen such an act of God's love in action.

I replaced my pride with gratitude and an overwhelming sense of love – and accepted their offer. I used the car for 4 months til I could get one of my own. I have never forgot the kindness, compassion and love that these dear people showed to me.

I was actually doubly blessed. You see I had never received such an amazing act of love and compassion but I also knew that I wanted to pass that kind of love – God's love – on to as many people as I could.

I think that was exactly what Jesus had in mind when he gave this instruction to his disciples.

Mostly, Jesus wanted his followers to: **DEPEND ON GOD.**

Jesus wanted his followers to trust that God would take care of their needs, that God would go ahead of them and prepare the hearts of those they would be ministering to, that God would go with them and provide for their needs.

This was an opportunity for the disciples to trust in God's care and not their own resources.

If you are at the stage where you are preparing to leave your bubble, how many of you wonder will God really provide? Will God be able to meet all my needs? Perhaps I better help God out and take along some of my own resources?

As if the God who created the universe, who created you and me, needs our help. But still that is our thought sometimes isn't it?

Trust me I get it. As I prepare to go to Africa, I am thinking: Lord do I need to take a toilet with me, are there actual working toilets where I am going and if not is there any way for me to take one with me. Sadly, I don't think there is.

But ladies you can understand my desire and need here right?

Letting go and trusting God, depending on God was one of the great lessons that the disciples would be able to learn as they went out for Jesus and shared the good news, it is one of the great lessons we get to learn as we do the same.

The next thing that Jesus tells his disciples to do as they prepare to leave the bubble is to: **BRING PEACE.**

Look at verses 11-13

These verses say to the disciples that they are to bring a blessing to the homes where they would stay.

In the New International version of the bible instead of the word blessing, they use the word peace.

“let your peace come upon the house, if the house is not deserving, let your peace return to you.”

This was a common greeting in Jesus day.

In many of Paul’s letters in the bible you will see him start out his letters by greeting the people with words similar to: “Grace and Peace to you in the name of our Lord.”

Jesus is telling the disciples and us - that everywhere we go should be marked with peace, we come in peace, we offer peace, our words and actions are covered with peace.

When we come into contact with people on the outside, our peace should overtake them.

Some will accept that peace and some will not, but that isn’t the point.

Jesus is telling us that the point is: when we knock on a door, go into a house, go to work, go to Africa and talk with someone about Jesus, we should bring peace, our conversations should be gentle, we can’t force them to accept our peace or to accept Jesus but that is not our concern.

That is Jesus’ concern.

Our concern is just to bring the message peaceably.

If they don’t accept it, then leave the house and our peace will leave with us simply because the people refused it.

Not because we are now asking a curse on the people or rejecting them.

We came in peace, we leave in peace.

Whatever happens to the people we leave is now in God’s hands.

But here is my question:

How many of us are producing peace everywhere we go?

Or are we so bogged down with all the trials and stresses of life that we bring anger, stress, worry and anxiety when we knock on the door?

What better way to catch people’s attention and cause them to want what we have than for peace to walk into every situation with us?

Think back over your week, how would it have been different if you had brought peace with you every where you went.

Imagine if the townspeople and villagers, when they saw the disciples coming, or your family or co-workers when they see you coming, said,

“Oh, God, here they come.”

How much different is the reaction when what people think when they see us coming is, “Oh, thank you God, here they come!”

By bringing peace we have an opportunity to bring broken pieces, people and places together, an opportunity for healing to take place and relationships to grow, an opportunity for Jesus to enter into all those difficult and broken areas and mend. What an opportunity - **BRINGING PEACE.**

And lastly we see Jesus telling the disciples to: **EXPECT REJECTION.**

Jesus had been rejected and he tells his followers that they too will be rejected.

He uses a term “*Shake the dust*” off your feet.

In Jesus day to *shake the dust from your feet* showed extreme contempt for an area and its people, as well as the determination not to have any further involvement with them.

Jews would do this whenever they passed through Gentile cities of territories to show their separation from Gentile influences and practices.

Now Jesus is not telling the disciples here that they are to hold the people they go to with the message of Jesus in contempt.

What he is trying to make clear to them is that some people will reject the message.

So long as the disciples had presented the message of Jesus peaceably, faithfully and carefully, they were not to blame if the townspeople rejected it.

Jesus tells us the same thing: we are not responsible for how others receive the message of salvation, that is between them and God –

But we are responsible for making sure we share the gospel clearly, peaceably and faithfully.

Many of you may have had a bad experience at some point along your faith journey, maybe it was in sharing the gospel or maybe it was from someone sharing it with you. And perhaps that experience has deterred you from moving on in your faith journey or from sharing your faith with others.

If so I am sorry.

If I am the cause of that pain in any way, shape or form then I am truly sorry.

There was a point early in my faith journey where a very dear and good friend of mine caused me some pain. I was truly confused and crushed by her actions because she was a Christian and had shared with me what that was supposed to mean. Her actions were not matching her words.

After crying and talking with another friend of mine, who was a pastor, he pointed me to this very same verse.

He reaffirmed the salvation message that I had been told by my other friend but also reminded me that we are all human and as such we fail many times.

He told me that God had plans for me and that it was time to *shake the dust from my feet* over this situation.

To put it into God’s hands, and get on with the mission God had entrusted to me.

Basically he said **Don’t be deterred by this bad experience.**

“The harvest is plentiful and the laborers are few and you Bonita have work to do.”

I went on into the ministry and have tried to faithfully follow and obey what God has uniquely called me to do as he has called me to follow him and to go out for him.

I did not let that one bad experience deter me from following what God was telling me and preparing me to do.

However, just because I shook the dust didn't mean that I quit praying for my friend. Soon after that, my friend developed cancer and although our friendship never returned completely to its former state, we were able to mend some of those fences and I am sure she is at peace in God's presence even now.

Just because someone rejects our preaching, our sharing the message of salvation with them, our bringing Jesus to them, doesn't mean we quit praying for them.

We may have to **quit preaching but we can keep on praying.**

When someone we love rejects the message of Jesus, we back off, we quit preaching to them because remember we come in peace.

Perhaps someone else will reach them, perhaps somewhere further down the road they will be more open to the message – whatever happens is between them and God.

However, We never stop praying for them.

We don't just hand them off, we hand them over to God in prayer.

So Jesus has given all his followers, the 12 disciples back then and all of us today some very valuable instructions.

Instructions that I am finding helpful as I prepare to go to Tanzania.

You see when we first started talking about going to Africa, I was excited and I was terrified.

That's unfamiliar territory, that's a long way to go, I don't know what to expect, I don't know what I can bring but I do know I can't bring my husband with me on this trip to watch out for me and I probably can't bring a toilet either.

But what Jesus reminded me is that I can take the love of Jesus to people in Africa, people who may not know Jesus, know his love.

What an awesome thought.

So as I think about what to take on my trip, I keep lightening up my load.

Maybe I won't take that extra pair of shoes, not if I want to have extra room to take treats for the children, we need room for the chimes we are going to take so the kids can learn to play them also.

That means I will need to depend on others to help take care of us when we get there.

But mostly I will be depending on God.

If he is sending me then there must be a reason and I trust and depend on God that he will sustain, guide, lead and direct my steps.

I definitely get to bring peace. Why would I want to barge in on their lifestyle, their lives? I am sure they have done fine without me around and will continue to do so once I am gone.

But since God is sending me then I want them to see the love and peace that Jesus offers first and foremost in my words, my actions, in everything I bring and represent.

In that way hopefully I will be able to have more meaningful conversations, they will be more open to me and more welcoming of my message.

And if I experience rejection, I will remember that ultimately an acceptance of Jesus is always between the person and God.

So I have been praying, I am praying now, and will continue to do so

And I invite you to join me and the rest of the team as we pray.

May Jesus be lifted high, may God be glorified, may lives be changed, may peace reign over all, may conversations lead to conversions, may Jesus' love transform lives, and

may we all trust in and depend on the God who created us, sustains us, guides us, and loves us.

As I prepare to leave yet again another bubble of my own building

I take with me Jesus' former instructions that Dan shared with us to:

Stay focused

Be a Person of One Message

Aim for the hurting and disadvantaged

And Give as if I had an endless supply.

But I also remember Jesus told me to:

Travel light as I depend on God and others

Bring peace wherever I go

And to Expect rejection but never give up praying.

Pray with me please.