

July 4th, 2010

Scripture Passages: Isaiah 66:10-14; Galatians 6:1-16; Psalm 66:1-9; Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

Importance of Hospitality within the commissioning and sending of the 70

Imagine yourself as 1 of the 70 – what would be the most challenging about this journey?

Marilyn Salmon of United Theological Seminary asked her class that question and she mostly received the typical answers about not being able to bring money with them or pack anything. One student spoke up and said what he would fear most would be the command to “eat what’s set before you.” People laughed, but he was serious. He told a story about growing up and how his family would be invited places and it was always questionable what was being served, but b/c they were to receive their hospitality, they ate whatever it was.

What does the command to “eat what is set before you” have to do with being commissioned and sent?

Story of visiting Lynda’s family in Chicago (my college roommate) during Lent – Catholic and originally from Mexico. Fish/seafood soup w/tentacles, etc. I didn’t think I could eat it. Lynda would trade bowls w/me when they went into the kitchen so that it looked like I was eating it. I was not very good about eating what was set before me and they were serving us and caring for us.

Traveling overseas – many times this is what one needs to do b/c of the hospitality of others – eat what is set before you. They are giving you the best food, maybe the best spot to sleep in and are doing so out of their generosity and b/c you welcome the stranger/guest.

Heidi, in Peace Corp in Mongolia, said that when she was there, living in a yurt, she ate every part of a goat that you could imagine. It was what they had, but there was something more. She was there to help, but before she could do that, she had to learn about the culture and eat with the people that she would help.

Hosting Bishop Nyiwe of the Lutheran Church in Cameroon in our home – I received the chance to generously care for him the same way that I was cared for when I visited Cameroon.

So, what do these stories of eating what’s set before you have to do with the commissioning and sending of the 70?

There must be something to it; Jesus mentions it not once, but two times. There’s something important about being the recipient of hospitality.

Before we begin to proclaim, to heal or to help/serve, we must first encounter the generosity of others.

Sometimes is hard for us to give up our concerns about comfort and about having choices in order to RECEIVE the generous hospitality of those we think we are going to bring God's word.

Story of mission trip to China w/high school youth. We went to help/do work for them. They wanted to host, feed, and take care of us, their guests. Before we could even begin to live out our faith by doing service, we had to accept their generosity of care and eat what was set before us. Only then could we even begin to think about what else we were commissioned and sent to do.

It's not that we are only commissioned to bring the good news to them, but we are commissioned to accept their generosity and recognize God already at work in that place through their generosity.

"Eat what is set before you."

We have another meal set before you today prepared by hands of this congregation and given to you by Jesus Christ himself. He offers this meal to you out of generosity not because of what you do, the works you do, but because it is the ultimate gift of grace.

Come; eat what is set before you.

Helpful Resources

- Excellent article: "Eating What is Set Before You" by Paul K Palumbo, **Word & World** Vol XXI, #3 Summer 2001.
- Workingpreacher.org
- RevGal blog