

# *“The Dust That Clings”*

*Luke 10: 1-11, 16-20*

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Guest Minister

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From the Pulpit

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*Luke 10: 1-11, 16-20*

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*Please join your heart with mine in prayer: Holy Spirit, touch my lips, open our hearts, transform all of our lives, today and each day forward. Amen.*

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Have you ever shaken the dust off yourself? Literally shaken the dust from your clothes? It’s not something we encounter here in Ohio too often. This is not generally a dusty place, but maybe you’ve been to the desert. Maybe you’ve experienced the dust of a dry place that clings to your clothes and shoes and skin. Maybe you know the physical feeling of shaking that dust off as you moved to the next place.

The disciples definitely did. In the towns they traveled they would have constantly been shaking their cloaks and tapping their sandals to remove the dust that clung to them.

And Jesus mentions this to the seventy, as he sends them out- if the Gospel, if the Good News is not well received, tell them this:

“Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near.”

Wow.

A town doesn't want to hear Jesus' message and even the dust that clings to the Disciples feet is wiped away in protest.

This wasn't about the dust, though, was it? This was about the rejection; the dismissal; the sending away without hearing the message of love brought by the disciples.

Let's talk for a minute about those disciples- Luke tells us 70 were appointed. 70! So often, we hear of the 12. The 12 disciples who represent the 12 tribes of Israel. But here Luke tells us of 70 sent out. 70 appointed to go and bring the news of God's kingdom.

Sarah Dylan Breuer says-

“Seventy, like the number of books in the Septuagint -- the translation of the wider collection of books the Pharisees, our spiritual ancestors as Christians, accepted as scripture, including the prophetic books such as Isaiah, into Greek so that the whole known world around the Mediterranean could hear the word of the God of Israel.

Seventy, like the number of elders chosen to share Moses' spirit of prophesy and burden of leadership (Numbers 11:16-17).

Seventy, like the number of times time seven that Jesus' followers are to forgive.

Seventy, a number of completion, of wholeness.”

These 70 head out in pairs with nothing to carry; nothing to give. They are told to offer peace to the houses they enter and to eat what is offered. They are told to wipe off the dust that clings from towns that reject them. They are not told to curse those towns or reject them as well. Only to wipe off the dust that clings. To shake off the hatred and vitriol, and move on to the next community.

Now this may be more familiar to you- you may not have had literal dust to shake off from your feet, but have you ever had to shake off the dust of hatred? The dust of fear and shame? The dust that lingers from trauma and abuse? We all have this kind of dust. It's inevitable. This dust is part of life.

This dust may cling to us before we are even able to walk. This dust may have been carried on the feet of our ancestors and laid on us without our even knowing. We have carried this dust, surprisingly heavy for something that is hard to see, longer than we know. And we have gathered our own dust as we've gone out, just as the seventy did.

The first thing that popped into my mind when I read this passage was a quote from Teddy Roosevelt, that I learned via Brene Brown:

“It is not the critic who counts; not the one who points out how the strong stumble, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the one who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends themselves in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if they fail, at least fails while daring greatly.”

A face marred by dust and sweat and blood. This has been a powerful image for me, ever since I heard it.

Brene Brown talks about the arena as a place we must enter; those places in our lives where we must be vulnerable and willing to do the hard work of change and transformation. We cannot sit in the stands and tell others how it must be done, we have to get up and do the work.

So think for a moment about that dust. What might the dust be in your life?

It might be something very personal, it might be something related to our larger culture.

Because we have the chance to shake that dust off and continue to create the kingdom of God.

The dust that clings manifests in many ways-

Prejudice and biases we may not have acknowledged we have. Fear and shame about who we are and who we want to be. An unwillingness to connect and open ourselves to another. This dust builds, we carry it and we pass it on whether we realize it or not.

It is time to shake the dust off our feet and say the kingdom of God has come near. Because the kingdom of God will not be a reality until we have begun to create it here on earth. When we name the biases we hold and begin our work of reconciliation or reparations, the kingdom of God is near. When we allow ourselves to truly be ourselves, open and aware, the kingdom of God is near. When we reach out to one another and build community, the kingdom of God is near.

The group sent out was not a small group; it was all God's people. It was and is all of us.

Earlier in the Gospel of Luke, when Jesus is preaching to his hometown of Nazareth, he says:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

This is an ambitious mission statement, Christ's mission on earth.

And we are the Body of Christ.

Christ's mission is the mission we are called to engage in, as we are in Christ. I want you to remember this, because you are a member of the Body of Christ, and Christ's mission statement is for you.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon you, because God has anointed you to bring Good News to the poor, to the captives, to the oppressed. It seems like a lot to ask and maybe it is, but for the Body of Christ, the mission for which Christ was anointed cannot be impossible.

In Baptism, you were made part of Christ's very Body on earth. Today, when we come to the Table, remember that it is Christ's broken body made whole again in the sharing. We are the seventy, stepping into the arena, covered in dust; sent out to share the love of God; called to be vulnerable and share of ourselves. Meant to speak and fight for justice and compassion. We are the disciples, shaking off the dust off when it clings so we can continue the work that God began.

Amen.

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