



Pastor Robyn Hogue

## SERMON

# Anything to Declare?

Luke 10:1-10

July 3, 2016

Skyline Presbyterian Church

Jesus gives His missionaries instructions for the road, He tells His trusted troubadours of the kingdom not to pack any “extras” as they undertake their journey. They are not to bring extra money, extra clothing, extra sandals. (Apparently, even in the first century, shoes were different from packing other stuff!) In twenty-first century terms it meant no smart phones, no credit cards, no favorite cologne, no leather handbags, no back-up shoes. All those accessories could downplay what Jesus told the disciples to take with them, what Jesus had entrusted to them — His anointing and authority, and the message of the kingdom of God.

Our recent trip to Greece was my first experience in travel where I needed a passport. I didn't get any colorful Greek stamps in my passport, but I did get a stamp for entering and leaving France as we changed planed in De Gaulle International Airport. On our return flight between Paris and SeaTac I got nervous about a customs check. There is one time when no one boasts and brags about what they have, and when the less you carry with you the better off you are: when getting off a plane from an international flight and entering customs. I imagined that as we approached the customs area we would be faced with two choices. There would be one line for those who have “nothing to declare.” There would be another line — a long, sad, often grid-locked line — for those who have something to declare. As it turns out, there is only one very long, grid-locked line—for U.S. citizens returning to SeaTac. There is a second very long, grid-locked line for all those entering the United States from other countries. In both lines, papers need to be filled out ahead of time. For those who do not have “stuff” — for those with “Nothing to Declare,” they can cruise on through. For those who admit they do have “stuff” — for those with “Something to Declare” — they are at the mercy and scrutiny of those who are “large and in charge.”

From Luke's text we hear Jesus coaching His seventy-two messengers to take nothing of value with them. So surely, you say, they are a “nothing to declare” group. They can go through the check point. But no. Just the opposite. They have a very firm, very specific declaration to make. In fact, they have everything to declare.

What do you have to declare this morning?

Anyone here this morning come from our Southern culture? If you are, you'll recognize the phrase: “I declare.” If you wanted to express wonderment over or approval to something someone else said, your response might well be “Well, I declare.” (Said, of course, with that certain southern twang.) In fact, I've always suspected Jesus had some Appalachian in Him when in the parable of the 10 Bridesmaids, He had the bridegroom say to five of them, “I declare, I do not know you” (Matthew 25:12). But you get the picture.

Every one of us here this morning will be asked this week in one form or another: “Do you

have anything to say to this? Anything to declare?”

I believe every one of us here this morning is as surely sent out by Jesus as these first emissaries were in our text for today. Whether sent by Jesus in the first century or sent by Jesus in the twenty-first century, we enter a culture that asks at every turn: “Anything to declare here?”

Christ’s “sent ones” never declare their own agenda; never declare their own gifts; never declare their own genius or expertise. Instead, Jesus’ disciples declare one thing and only one thing — the nearness of the kingdom of God. “Seek first the kingdom of God... (not your gifts and training and other supplies) and all good things will be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33). Because we have “nothing to declare” but God’s grace, and the nearness of God’s Kingdom, we actually have everything to declare. The heavens declare the glory of God...to the psalmist (Psalm 19:1), to the scientist and to you. In fact, we have so much to declare that we must be open to the slow line, the difficult line of inspection.

Did you notice what Jesus doesn’t say? He doesn’t tell His would be ambassadors to criticize the town’s culture or point out what’s wrong with their worship or spirituality. He doesn’t tell them to point out people’s sins until they are so convicted of guilt they are ready to pray the “sinner’s prayer.” He doesn’t tell them to stand in the crowded places and hold placards scolding all who walk by “in the name of the God who saves.” He tells them to accept hospitality, to build relationships, to help those who are sick. Their one message is to be... “The Kingdom of God has come near to you.”

Far more than twelve people had been following Jesus. Here Jesus designated a group of seventy-two (close to the average size of a Presbyterian congregation today) to prepare others for His later visit. These disciples were not unique in their qualifications. They were not better educated, more capable, or of higher status than Jesus’ other followers. What equipped them for this mission was their awareness of Jesus’ power and a dream to reach others for His potential relationship with them.

In Christian service there is no unemployment. God has work enough for everyone. Jesus encouraged the disciples not just to do the work, but also to pray for workers. Part of every missionary’s job is to pray for new workers and to help newcomers learn the ropes. Whatever your role in God’s work, pray today for more helpers. Believers are not to work alone. God wants us to pray, recruit, and equip others to join us as we explore opportunities to serve Jesus. Some people, as soon as they understand the gospel, want to go convert people immediately. Jesus gave a different approach: begin by mobilizing people to pray. And, before praying for people to come to know Jesus the way you have come to know Jesus, pray that other concerned disciples will join you in reaching out to them. God will lead you to important responsibility, but prayer comes first.

Anything to declare? We travel light with nothing to declare but that the Kingdom of God has come near.