



Hand Tools – Touchpoint for June 29, 2022

Luke 10:1-3 (NRSVA) After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. He said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore, ask the Lord of the Harvest to send out laborers. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves.”

Luke 10:4-11 “Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. 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. Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide ... Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; cure the sick who are there, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, ‘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.’ I tell you, on that day it will be more tolerable for Sodom than for that town.”

Luke 10:17-20 The seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!” He said to them, “I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

(A passage from Luke, in three sections, with some commentary for context)

Luke 10:1-3

After this (after being rejected by the towns of Samaria), the Lord appointed seventy others (having prior sent out the 12) and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. He said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore, ask the Lord of the Harvest to send out laborers. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves.” (This common lore is as true now as it was then, so we get it, but Jesus was an itinerant pastor, not a mega-evangelist; this large group mission is cobbled together by Luke. Luke is writing from his latter-century context and concept of evangelism, blending several sources, providing - through words attributed to Jesus - a laborer’s toolkit.)

Luke 10:4-11

“Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals (you will be hungry and hurting); and greet no one on the road (because you need to get to food and shelter). Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this house!’ (The courtesies neglected on the road are essential now). And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. (Don’t sweat it, it’s their loss not yours.) Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide. (For a young church wrestling with the legacy of strict dietary laws, Luke says “eat up,” a radical break from tradition that he will repeat in Acts with the story of Peter’s dream!) Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; cure the sick who are there, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ (This sounds like Jesus, doesn’t it? Until Luke adds:) But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, ‘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.’ I tell you, on that day it will be more tolerable for Sodom than for that town.” (Luke continues with a number of verses that warn of the wrath that will befall the towns that do not welcome evangelists, but it is so widely agreed that they are not-Jesus that even the common lectionary leaves them out.)

Luke 10:17-20

The seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!” He said to them, “I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your

names are written in heaven.” (Legend has it that a well-known Jesus saying may have been, “I watched Satan fall from heaven.” Luke extrapolates from it assurances of authority and protection that any latter first-century evangelist would crave, being lambs among wolves as they were.)

Grace and peace to you from the All in whom we live and move and have our being.

I have a thing for hand tools.

This claw has been a favorite of mine during demolition work for a bathroom remodel. It’s pulled drywall, leveraged 2x4’s, and lifted many a nail.

This saw has cut many overgrown limbs from the mimosa and fruit trees in our yard.

This screwdriver is my favorite – the head can be switched from flat to Phillips. It’s an everyday tool, as essential to nurturing the home as a fork is to nourishing the body.

I have a thing for hand tools. I like the patience and perseverance they demand.

I like the sllllowwww thinking that comes with a single-minded focus on doing one small thing at a time, and doing it – patiently, with perseverance – until there is the joy of a job well and truly done.

I **HAVE** power tools. A reciprocating saw. A chainsaw. A drill with all kinds of attachments.

I even use them sometimes.

But I don’t like the noise and fury of them.

Give me a job, some simple hand tools, all the time in the world – yep, that job will get done.

I’ve been working with tools a lot lately. We’re in the middle of several home improvement projects. We’re temporarily living in the garage because work is underway in our living area.

I guess that’s why Luke’s story about evangelism seems a lot like a toolkit to me.

I spent some time sorting through the tools in this passage.

I ended up with two distinct toolsets.

One toolset contains tools that most closely look like or sound like Jesus. These are hand tools.

The most recognizable Jesus tools in Luke’s story are:

- The sharing of his peace.
- The grace to accept hospitality. This tool takes lots of practice.
- The simple but profound message that, listen if you will, the Kingdom of God has come near.

These hand tools are not hard to use, once you get the hang of them, but they require practice, patience, perseverance, slow thinking, and a reaaalllllyyyy long view about outcomes. Nothing gets done in a hurry with hand tools.

The other toolset is made up of tools that serve Luke’s evangelizing agenda. These are power tools. In this passage, as in real life, power tools, well ... they definitely overpower hand tools.

Luke’s power tools are the drill, the chain saw, and the nail gun.

- The power drill that God will get you if you do not believe.

- The chain saw of God's wrath for entire communities.
- The nail gun of power and authority – in the name of Jesus – to demonize, subjugate, dominate or drive out anyone we have decided is an enemy.

Power tools are harder than hand tools to use in some ways, but they don't require as much patience or perseverance. They get the job done fast. Their results are consistent and immediate. Those results are often irrevocable. Who among us has not learned this the hard way? Who among us has not drilled through, cut down, or crucified something ... or someone?

The noise and fury of Luke's power tools echoes through the centuries – from the militant nationalism of Constantinople's version of Christianity to the Crusades – from the church doctrine naming all non-Christians as “offspring of the devil” that fueled the genocides that built Christian empires around the globe – to “killing the Indian” in North America's Indigenous people and apartheid in South Africa – from using the bible's toxic “curse of Ham” to justify white supremacy in this country – to the “God-Guns-Trump” twist on militant evangelism that swept through our pews and rocks our sensibilities still.

The noise and fury of Christianity's power tools echoes in our hearts, embedded as they are in scripture, liturgies, hymns, and prayers. Author and theologian Brian McLaren experienced it this way:

“When I met a gay person, when I interacted with an atheist, an agnostic, or a person of another religion ... my Bible-quoting inner fundamentalist seemed to whisper in my ear, ‘Don't trust them ... Don't fully love them. If they're open, you should try to convert them, but otherwise keep your distance. Come apart from them and be separate!’”

He might as well have used Luke's words, *“Wipe the dust off your feet and leave them with threats and curses on your way out the door.”*

McLaren goes on to say:

“We are coming to see that in hallowed words like almighty, kingdom, dominion, supreme, chosen, sacrifice, lord, and even God, dangerous viruses often lie hidden, malware that must be identified and purged from our software if we want our future to be different from our past. We are realizing that our ancestors didn't merely misinterpret a few Scriptures in their day; rather, they consistently practiced a dangerous form of interpretation.”

McLaren's lifework – and mine, and maybe yours too – is not to get bigger and better power tools. Our work is to re-learn the heft and shape of Christianity's earliest tools – the Jesus hand tools.

These hand tools – **peace and grace and good news** – are not hard to use once you get the hang of them, but they require practice, patience, perseverance, slow thinking, and a reaaaalllllyyyy long view about outcomes. Nothing gets done in a hurry with hand tools.

But then, to my way of thinking, nothing really needs to GET done – not by me or you or even the church. The big job – the big job of RENOVATION – the big job of making all things new – that job has already been done, is still being done, and will continue to be done by the All-In-One whose love for all creation is eternal, whose grace is unlimited, and whose generosity knows no bounds.

As an old, old prayer of the church goes:

"Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen"

So ... I have a thing for hand tools. I like the patience and perseverance they demand. I like the slow thinking that comes with a single-minded focus on doing one small thing at a time, and doing it – patiently, with perseverance – until ...

Until the demons of my heart are overcome by the practice of sharing Christ's peace ...
Until the venom in my tongue is washed away by persevering at the table of grace ...
Until the dust on my feet is all holy dust, an accumulation of one small step at a time through God's kingdom come near ...

Until I return to Jesus with joy and he laughs, "There you go, sweetie. You are making my joy complete. You are learning to love the other as I have loved you."

Amen.

Spirit in the Desert

Opening Song

Be Still

(London Fox Taize Choir)

Be Still, know that I am God.

Spirit of the Living God

(Celtic Spirits)

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.

Break me, melt me, mold me, fill me

Bible Passage

(A passage takes us from one place to another)

Touchpoint

(Where God's story touches our life story)

Life of Christ Renew Me

(Margaret Rizza)

Life of Christ renew me, Way of Christ direct me,
Truth of Christ restore me, Peace of Christ surround me. *repeat*

Word of Christ instruct me, Prayer of Christ enrich me,
Work of Christ inspire me, Light of Christ shine through me. *repeat*

Cross of Christ redeem me, Pain of Christ be in me.
Bread of Christ sustain me, Fire of Christ enflame me. *repeat*

Breath of Christ flow in me, Strength of Christ support me,
Joy of Christ uplift me, Love of Christ transform me. *repeat*

Peace of Christ surround me, Light of Christ shine through me,
Fire of Christ enflame me, Love of Christ transform me.

The Meal

The Lord's Prayer

(Robert Stone, The Cambridge Singers, John Rutter)

Benediction

My Peace

(Keith Duke)

Peace to know, Peace to live,
Peace to show, and a peace to give.
It's a peace to share and a peace that cares.
My peace I give unto you. My peace.