Over the years I’ve had numerous opportunities to participate in various summer mission projects with different groups of young people both domestically and overseas. We’ve worked with children of immigrants in Chinatown, teaching them Math and English, telling them Bible stories and introducing Jesus to some of them for the very first time. We’ve walked the streets of Philadelphia to witness firsthand what it means to be homeless on the street. We’ve slept on the hard floor in a gymnasium without A/C and had to walk 15 minutes just to get a shower. We’ve visited nursing homes, volunteered in the soup kitchen and served hot meals, rebuilt homes after Katrina down in New Orleans. These were all rewarding experiences, especially among the young people whose faith was being nurtured and perspectives re-shaped through these experiences. I would have to say, by far, the most memorable summer mission experience that I’ve had was my two-week overseas trip to Taiwan as part of the *I Love Taiwan* program back in the summer of 2007 with the *Presbyterian Church in Taiwan* – a sister denomination to the PC(USA).

During those 2 weeks, we got to engage with many children and their parents by sharing our love and passion for Jesus, as well as our personal faith journeys. As we learned from my friend and PC(USA) mission co-worker – Rev. Jonathan Seitz, who came to speak with us last October, only 2% of the 24M population in Taiwan consider themselves as Christians, the rest are either Buddhist or atheists. So certainly, the harvest is plentiful, but workers are few (certainly we could always use a few more). Do you know that there have been Presbyterian presence on the island of Formosa for nearly 150 years (1871), thanks to the missionaries from the Netherland, Canada, and the US.

Incidentally Jonathan’s family has just returned back to Taiwan after their year-long mission discernment process here in the States. Jonathan will continue to teach, as a visiting scholar, at the Taiwan Presbyterian Seminary and Emily will continue to serve in various capacities with the local libraries and churches teaching English.

In 2007, I was among 70 or so young people from all over the world who were living among strangers ½ way around the world from home, nevertheless we felt right at home the moment we landed and were greeting warmly at the airport. Our team was split into several groups based on our various leadership skills and language proficiency levels. We were sent out among various churches and were housed by the local church members’ homes. We ate whatever we were being offered by our host families. We slept wherever they assigned us, sometimes in the guest rooms or sometimes on the floor with limited or no air-conditioning in the sultry hot and humid summer days of Taiwan, much worse than we would experience here.

Basically we were told to be flexible with whatever living accommodation we might be offered, and eat whatever food that was presented before us. So we were pretty much at the mercy and the hospitality of our hosts.

Each evening our team gathered for devotion and personal reflection. Ironically we were reflecting on the very same passage that we read earlier from Luke, Chapter 10…about Jesus sending out 70 of his disciples, two-by-two, into the towns and villages, meeting total strangers, preparing the way for Jesus’s arrival, laboring in the harvest field. Those 70 disciples would only go to places where they were welcomed….and if they were not, they would simply shake the dust off their sandals and move on to the next town. Those 70 disciples took a giant leap of faith with confidence that the Holy Spirit has already gone before them preparing for their arrival.

The number “70” was also symbolic. It implied a “completeness” of ALL of humanity, as recorded in Genesis 10...during the time of the Tower of Babel. It signified that the good news of salvation and the coming kingdom of God is for **ALL** of God’s people, not just for a few elites chosen ones, but for ALL who profess their faith in Christ.

Those 70 commissioned disciples were being sent into the villages to pave the way before Jesus arrived. They were told to travel “lightly” with only what’s on their backs…nothing more and nothing less, while trusting totally upon God’s provision. Some would embrace them and some would not. Despite these oppositions, these disciples were not discouraged, as they entered into the people’s home two-by-two, delivering God’s peace among the people, as the Spirit guided their steps.

As we have seen throughout the Old and the New Testaments, **God demonstrates God’s presence among those who put their faith and trust in Him!** As we read a couple of weeks ago, we read how God affirmed Elijah’s calling, and pledging never to leave him, for as long as he remained faithful to the calling in participating in God’s work. We go as true laborers of God’s harvest field, for *the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.[[1]](#footnote-1)*

For many of us, the “harvest field” may be defined by where we work, where we live…our apartment complex, our next door neighbors, or simply whom we interact with on a day-to-day basis. They may be our family members and relatives, who may or may have yet come to know Christ, or they’ve used to go to church, but are no longer.

The other day I was talking to one of my neighbors who is also Christian but goes to another church, she was sadden that her 20 something year old daughter, no longer goes to any church at all. She thought that she had raised her daughter well, but had failed to nurture and support her, as she now makes her own choices. She asks for prayers that one day her daughter would rediscover her faith and her relationship with Christ once again.

When it comes to mission field, we don’t necessarily need to look too far away. We may not need to travel ½ way around the world when the mission frontier has come upon us and knocking at our doorstep.

Furthermore, in order to carry out God’s mission, it requires a great deal of personal discipline and humility as we bring greetings to others in the name of God. How we talk to others matters. What we say and what NOT to say matters, especially when greeting someone for the first time. We need to be trained for that. People yearn for genuine relationship and sincerity of our hearts. **Conversely people will see our disingenuity, if we are not speaking the truth of ourselves, seeking ulterior motivation, or not walking in the right relationship with God.** People can pick those up very easily. We need to be mindful of this as well.

In verse 4, Jesus instructed those 70 commissioned disciples to “***greet no one on the road***” until they reach their final destinations. Now before we go on, let’s pause here for a moment. This does not mean that we are to behave arrogantly and not talk to anyone along the way. I don’t think that’s what Jesus meant. It simply means that **we need to focus upon our overall mission and motivation of why we do what we do, as God’s ambassadors and deliverers of peace upon God’s people** and to announce the arrival of the kingdom of God is near. All this we do for the benefits and the glory of God and not for ourselves. So we must stay on-course and remain focused in what we have been called to do.

Over the years, we’ve seen how the term “mission” has been slightly re-interpreted and understood, reflective of the changing world we live in today. “Mission” implies any Godly focused activities that are expressed outwardly toward the others. **It is outwardly focused rather than inwardly served. We need to remind ourselves, from time to time, why do we do what we do and for whose benefit and to whose glory?**

During our mission trip in Taiwan, we were humbly reminded that we were simply messengers sent by God, to be the hands and the feet of God’s work…while taking a small part in the overall global mission of God and not ours. We reminded ourselves not to congratulate ourselves, but we give God all the glory for allowing us to use our God given gifts for God’s ministry. **We were the reaper of what the Spirit had already sown.**

The children may or may not remember us by our names when they grow up, but that’s OK. For as long as they remember it was Jesus who touched their hearts and that there is a God who loves them and cares for them, it was all worth-while.

Like those 70 commissioned apostles, which literally means *“the ones being sent out”*, we might be called upon and be sent out like *“lambs into the midst of wolves”* into hostile spaces, not to be devoured by them, but to bring the message of hope, justice, and peace into a world that is often filled with chaos, hatred, and hostilities…a world that may not know what God’s love is, or experience it first-hand through a human agent. That’s when WE come in. This is our mission in fulfilling God’s calling to this world.

The questions for all of us to reflect on today are the followings…**What *“harvest field”* is God sending us into today? What seeds are we being asked to scatter and to reap today? What fruits are we bearing for the kingdom of God?**

**The kingdom of God may radically redefine how we see the world going forward, as we are being called to build bridges and relationships among strangers and friends, and not walls that divide or separate us as families.**

As the Apostle Paul reminded the church in Galatia and to us today, “*let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.[[2]](#footnote-2)*

And as we heard earlier also from 1st Peter, “*Always be prepared to give an answer to [any] everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.”[[3]](#footnote-3)*

Friends, these are the seeds of the Good News that we are being asked to scatter and to labor out in the harvest field. For indeed “*the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.”* Let’s do our parts to live up to this mandate. Thanks be to God. In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *Luke 10:2* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Galatians 6:9-10* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *1 Peter 3:15-16* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)