**TITLE: HELPLESS INFANTS**

I am an early riser. Always have been. As a child I was always up before Mom and Dad especially on any Saturday morning. There were cartoons to be watched. And there were things to be done: like making pancakes. Imagine my mothers delight when she walked into the kitchen to find me –four or five years old- “making pancakes.” Sugar spilled, eggs broken on the floor, various bowls and pans strewn about and flour strewn about as a light dusting of snow. **I was helping. Making pancakes.**

My parents weren’t always big on me “helping” them with things. Neither were Rebekah’s. Her mother is infamous in the family for responding to little Rebekah Sue’s offer of help by saying: “The best way you can help me is to not help me.” Sue feels repentant for this to this day.

One online author reminds her readers of the amazing opportunity for teaching and bonding that is offered to us when our little ones say: **“Can I help?”** She basically says: Relax about the chores because the relationship is what’s important: So keep things “kid-help friendly” –like kids plates and cups in a low drawer so they can take them from the dishwasher and put them away. If it's a job that’s just not safe for them find an alternative. And most important: The job will take longer- expect it. The job will be done less than perfectly- accept it.

I did a few things right with my kids as a Dad. but one thing I did wrong was to not let my kids “help.”

For exactly the same reasons: it will take longer to do it with them than to do it myself. The job won’t be done right so I’ll have to fix it later. *All that boils down to being more concerned about the job than I was about the relationship.*

Of course we all know what happens when we let the kids help don’t we? Here’s some things parents have discovered by letting the kids “help.”

* A king size waterbed holds enough water to fill a 2000 square foot house, 4 inches deep.
* A 3-year-old's voice is louder than 200 adults in a crowded restaurant.
* If you hook a dog leash over a ceiling fan, the motor is not strong enough to rotate a 42 pound boy wearing Batman underwear and a superman cape. It is strong enough, however, to spread paint on all four walls of a 20 by 20 foot room.
* When you hear the toilet flush and the words "Uh-oh", it's already too late.
* A six year old can start a fire with a flint rock even though a 36 year old man says they can only do it in the movies.
* A magnifying glass can start a fire even on an overcast day.
* No matter how much Jell-O you put in a swimming pool, you still can't walk on water.
* Pool filters do not respond well to Jell-O.
* Marbles in gas tanks make lots of noise when driving.
* Always check your oven for plastic toys before turning it on.
* The spin cycle on the washing machine does not make earthworms dizzy.
* It will however make cats dizzy.
* Cats throw up twice their body weight when dizzy.

**There are reasons why some of us don’t let the kids help- not necessarily good ones but: reasons.** But despite **our “reasons”** little kids want to help because they want to be WITH YOU and because they see the adult things you do as SPECIAL- even if it’s just *loading the dishwasher or making pancakes.* These are important things to a kid, mysterious things. And our little ones want to be part of something big, something that, to them, is important and special. And it’s not a trait we grow out of- despite how SIN has broken us, **the desire to be part of something important, something TRANSCENDENT is built into all us humans.**

It won’t surprise you to find out that **God is a better Father than I am**; not the least because He willingly invites his little ones- who He knows will make a mess of things- to help with his most important task: **the saving of the Kosmos.** So we find ourselves in Luke 10, vs 1-24.

*There’s lots to see here (hover) but this morning I want to take us down one particular path.*

Some things have happened, important things, like Peter giving the right answer when Jesus asked “But who do YOU say that I am? (You are the the Messiah) and what we call The Transfiguration: Jesus glorified and in conversation with (the also-glorified) Moses and Elijah about Jesus’ “departure.”

These things have given Jesus a clear sense that it’s time to point himself to Jerusalem (9:51). He knows what has to happen there: suffering, rejection, death and finally resurrection (9:22, 10:44). In ch 13 he directs sarcastic comment to Herod Antipas that he’s got to get to Jerusalem because that’s where all the prophets die.

There is a sense that **TIME IS SHORT.** He will not pass through these towns and villages again.

And a lot of people need to have the chance to see and hear and turn to God through his Son, Jesus, before Jesus appointed task is completed in Jerusalem.

(In the OT, refusal to follow God results in judgment in the form of foreign invasion. N.T. Wright is convinced that Jesus Kingdom message of Peace and Agape love is the final opportunity for God’s people to respond. If, as a people, they reject God’s coming to them (reject Jesus) then the result will be as in the past invasion and the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple at the hands of Rome ( 70CE Lk 19:44; Lk 21:20-24).

Between this moment in Luke 10 and Jesus’ rejection in Jerusalem the time is short. When Jesus says: The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few…(v2) his point is simply we’ve got more work than time, people. Though “all the fullness of God” is in Jesus (Col1) His human form means he is limited by time and space. He can’t reach everyone in the time allotted. *There’s too much work to be done in the time left to him.* **JESUS NEEDS HELP.**

And so from the larger group of followers who have been with him throughout Galilee Jesus chooses 70 (probably including the twelve)…”and sent themin pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come (1b).” (The number is symbolic for the Jews. When Moses needed help governing the (rebellious) people 70 elders were appointed and God gave them all a portion of His Spirit (Numbers 11 implies it was 72 which is why some MSS say 72). Seventy is also the number of nations in the world (Luke) according to the ancient perspective of Genesis & the seats on the Sahhedrin-the Jewish “supreme court.”)

These 70 will go out ahead of Jesus to 35 towns and villages between here and Jerusalem. **Their efforts** at preparing a town for Jesus’ coming will make it possible for the largest number of people to hear and embrace Jesus and his message in the time remaining.

Like the previous sendings, these 70 are to announce the coming of the Kingdom of God and heal illness. They are to travel light, depend on God and keep focused on the task (v4) *because time is short.* And they are to be content with whatever room & board they receive.

**Jesus, has SENT them out and given them AUTHORITY over all the Enemy’s power.** He’s also given them AUTHORITY to offer blessings of Peace and, if rejected, declare a warning about judgment to the city (wiping dust). **Jesus says they are his voice speaking his words and his words are God’s words. To reject any of the 70 is to reject Jesus and to reject Jesus is to reject God.**

And since “all things” have been handed by the Father over to Jesus, and since Jesus is sending them out with HIS authority as representatives of Jesus and the Father, I think Jesus himself is Lord of the Harvest both sending out and giving power and authority over all things.

And Jesus, the Lord of the Harvest, the one who whom the Father has given all things, the one who knows & reveals the Father has freely sent the Seventy out as representatives of not only himself- the Messiah, the Son of the Living God, but also as representatives of God the Father as well. (V16   “The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me.”) **Jesus, the Lord of the Harvest, sent them out to accomplish a seriously vital and gigantically important job- the results of which are either blessing or judgment-** a high-stakes assignment.

**So what does Jesus say about these 70 rookies? How does he describe them?** When they come back excited that they could cast out demons in Jesus name, Jesus says: “Yes the Enemy falling. But take it easy, don’t get excited about your part in it. That authority & power came from me, not you. Your only claim is that “your name is written in Heaven” –that you’re on God’s side.

At the end Jesus says: 24 many prophets and kings wished to see the things which you see, and did not see *them,* and to hear the things which you hear, and did not hear *them.*” In other words people who were way more important than you lot- prophets, like Isaiah and Malachi, and Kings like David and Hezekiah- knew about all this long before you did and hoped to see it but didn’t. In other words:you’re not in this because of your wisdom or power. **You’re not seeing all this because of how important you are.**

Jesus says about the 70: **3** “ I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.Having raised lambs I can tell you Jesus is not complimenting them on their cutness or innocence. Lambs are absolutely weak and helpless. They are without ability to defend themselves, unprepared for difficult circumstances. They are the sort of easy prey that makes a big bad wolf grin from ear to ear. **Jesus: you are helpless.**

And you might say well, Skip, the twelve are there right. Peter and James and John and the rest. They’ve been with Jesus the most. Surely they will keep the others on the right path! Do you remember the end of ch9?

That’s where we found the disciples arguing about which of them was the greatest, and John telling someone to stop freeing people from demons in Jesus’ name cause he wasn’t part of the franchise, and James and John ready to barbecue a Samaritan village with holy fire cause they said “no” to Jesus. The gospels are very honest about the imperfections of Jesus followers.

And let’s just say: the Seventy aren’t likely to be any better than the Twelve, are they?

No, none of them are wise or powerful or intelligent. God’s hidden “these things” (Jesus’ Lordship and the Kingdom of God) from the wise and powerful. Instead He’s revealed it to “children” or more accurately: infants. 21 “I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants.

Time is short. Jesus, the Messiah, needs help. And the helpers he chooses are HELPLESS INFANTS.

The bigness of his identity and the importance of His Kingdom has been revealed to these and they want to be a part of it- like children who want to help Mom and Dad with the adult things they do.

They are helpless lambs among wolves but He chooses them to deliver healing and release and bless with peace, and declare the threat of judgment.

*In their understanding they are infants, but they are given Jesus’ authority, they represent him and the Father who sent Him- v16 a*nd they grasp the Kingdom and Jesus’ Lordship -v21, and they’re seeing things Kings and prophets wished they could see –v24

**They are helpless infants*. But Jesus welcomes their help.***

Their weakness and inability does not bother Jesus at all.The fact that the job will likely take longer because of their “help” (I told him not to…) doesn’t bother Jesus. The fact that the job will be done “less than perfectly” (call down fire on them…) doesn’t put Jesus off. The fact that the Father may need to come back around later and tidy things up doesn’t bother Him one bit.

**Jesus is the good Father** who is willing to let his kids help him with his most important task and he’s not worried about us messing it up, or getting it wrong, or keeping him from his TV program. Despite our weakness, our lack of understanding, our fear, our potential to mess things up, **Jesus wants our help- he asks for it- in his very serious work of saving the Kosmos.**

**So what does that mean to you? I can think of three things.**

First: Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, the Messiah, God in human flesh, needed help. And when he needed help he asked for it and accepted it when it came: asking the Samaritan woman for a drink, letting Simon of Cyrene carry his cross, graciously accepting the hospitality of his friends for three years, and helping him with his own worl of salvation for the world. If Jesus asked for help when he needed it maybe you should give up your pride and ask for help too.

Second: With only a few exceptions (Paul) none of the people Jesus sent out to help in proclaiming the kingdom or saving the Kosmos were trained or educated in evangelism. He didn’t pick folks because they had a particular skill set. He accepted the help of ordinary people who saw him as Lord and saw the Kingdom as coming: people just like you.

In fact I’ll say that most everyone in this room is more biblically educated and better equipped with an understanding of the gospel than were most of the 70 Jesus sent out. Shoot, besides of years of gospel teaching under your belt, you have both the NT and the HS- which the 70 didn’t. **They were no better than you. YOU are no less than them.** As Marianne Williamson wrote: “Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us.”

Third and Finally: When we **ask for help or agree to help** we put ourselves in a place where relationship can happen.

 In the movie The Way Way Back (pg13) 14-year-old Duncan is dealing with his folks divorce and his Mom’s boyfriend who constantly demeans him (like telling him he’s a “3” on a scale of 1-10). The Summer looks pretty horrible until he stumbles into a broken down Water Park and meets Owen, the irresponsible but caring park manager (Sam Rockwell). Owen sees Duncan’s need. To meet that need Owen asks Duncan to help him out by taking a job at the water park-which he accepts. The work gives Duncan purpose and friends who become the family he desperately needs. Owen asks for help in order to help Duncan. Duncan helps and in helping finds some of the healing he needs.

See in giving or in receiving help we put ourselves in the place where we can carry each other’s burdens, where love can grow, friendships can be made- and we can be made whole… or more whole.

Our weakness or inability does not bother Jesus at all.The fact that the job will likely take longer because of our “help” doesn’t bother Jesus. The fact that the job will be done “less than perfectly” doesn’t put Jesus off. **Jesus wants our help- he asks for it knowing it will be good for the Kingdom and good for us and good for Him.**

WHAT NEXT?

Your assignment is threefold this week:

I. Ask someone for help with something this week yardwork, a household chore, a ride whatever.

Extra credit if you have to give up some pride to make the “ask.”

II. Whenever you pray this week, begin by thanking God for the way His glory shines through you.

(Maybe spend some time thinking about what that means.)

III. If you find yourself “helping” someone with a task (See assignment #1) remind yourself it’s not about the job, it’s about the relationship. Jobs don’t stay done but Relationships are eternal.