

Called to be Story Listeners

Today we have the opportunity to live chapter 10 in Luke's Gospel. The Chapter begins with Jesus sending out the 70 to continue his ministry. I am sending you out to be story listeners. At a later time I would like to meet with you to discuss the stories you heard. From St. Paul's letters we learn experience centered is where we live the Gospel. Luke 9 and 10 provides the experience of Being sent out to do ministry.

In chapter 9 we learn the continuation of the ministry of Jesus is made imperative by his preparing to die . Jesus sends them out to do heal translate cure. Therapeutic is the Greek word and in Greek it means healing. The word has been brought in to English as therapy.

Strongs concordance

the root of "*therapy*" and "*therapeutic*," usually involves *natural elements* in the process of healing.] story listening is about a natural as you can get. I could document from various research findings the healing dimension of story listening, And I have participated in this modality of healing as a chaplain.

What is clear to me, Luke the physician sees their mission as therapeutic. And so does the New Testament. The Greek word for healing appears 43 times in various forms in the New Testament. Updating to our time, Story listening is documented as a mode of healing. As story listeners and disciples of Christ we will continue the reality of healing as the Kingdom of God continues to break into our experience. After sharing stories some may be in a new place with different feelings, meta noia in the Greek, new mind.

The Context for the Gospel readings from chapter 10 of Luke for the last three Sundays is from what some call a Farewell address. Jesus begins his Journey from Galilee to Jerusalem to be crucified and on the third day rise again. The first of his three announcements to the disciples appear at the end of chapter 9. Luke makes specific the conversation with Moses and Elijah in the story of the Transfiguration also in chapter 9, where they discuss his departure

The sending out of the 70 in chapter 10 begins with a briefing as in a military mission. My sermon today is a short briefing for your story listening mission. I have been training folks in various ways for story listening beginning in 1966, 56 years. This is my first time for sending out story listeners from the pulpit. All of us will be learning in the process. But like the Lord's call you don't start being fully prepared

In the briefing Jesus sends us out as innocent and vulnerable. Lambs among wolves. We have no idea ahead of time what we will find. And we are to shed our familiar supports in order to be more open to what we will hear. In Jesus time and in our time the harvest is plentiful and the laborers are few.

After the sending out of the 70 and their return The next 2 stories can be linked together as the masculine and feminine models of caring, compassion, and listening.

The Samaritan story has an introduction that is essential to both readings, last Sunday. The dialogue between the lawyer and Jesus has a central message. Relational is where life is centered. That is crucial.

“Love God with all your heart, mind, and soul, and your neighbor as yourself.” That is what is being lost and damaged in our present culture. How this came to be I don’t fully understand. The New York Times writer who has studied this and who writes about this doesn’t have the answer either. He is now pursuing how we recover the relational. Story listening is part of the recovery.

Recovery will be through the relational. Christ affirms this. Who is my neighbor? Jesus tells a story of a person wounded and in a ditch. Those who represent the authorities pass by. It is this rejected stranger who is the compassionate one. He goes further by involving the inn keeper. WE are witnesses to healing as well as collaboration. The story ends with Go and Do in the present imperative, Go and Do likewise continuously. This is a fixit story which we can say is more masculine although we all have both characteristics within us.

The Mary model of listening, staying with the story without fixing, requires transformation for both men and women in our talking and fixit culture. A doctor who became a Befriender probably said it best. “When I was a doctor I knew what I would say when I walked into the room, As a befriender I would find out.”

In the Mary and Martha story in today’s Gospel we need to ask: What did Jesus and Mary talk about? Luke the physician doesn’t tell us. We don’t know what he wrote in the physician’s chart. I have a guess after being a hospital chaplain. He shared his preparing to die. Mary Listened continuously in the present and That was the better part. By listening without trying to fix anything Mary gave Jesus a healing experience as in the Transfiguration. And Martha’s part is affirmed for fixing the food in the midst of her distractions. Jesus makes it clear as to what he needed.... Someone to just listen.

Many of you are already doing/being story listeners. You have also been blessed for listening, how often have you heard, thanks for listening. There are many other remarks that affirm listening makes a difference. Last week I heard, “It helps to communicate.”

I like to say I help folks know what they already know but didn’t know they knew. What is unconscious is being made conscious. We were once deaf in our understanding but now we can talk about a life-giving experience through story listening. And the experience is mutual. All benefit. The disciples returned joyful.

Heart to heart conversations have been documented in the scientific studies by James Lynch. The counselor and counselee were recorded with attached heart monitors. After transcribing the conversation and marking where they were really communicating Their heart rhythms fell in sync with each other at the places marked.

I will close with a story from a workshop on Luke 10 that involved two Sunday afternoon sessions. The story comes from the second Sunday.

A man had taken his friend to the doctor's office. On the way home the friend said, "I don't think I have long to live." The man said in response, "Don't talk that way." And then he shared his conclusion after some reflection. "I think I walked by on the other side." He moved the Samaritan story to his own story. I said "you have made a good beginning. You can go back to your friend and say, 'the other day when you said you didn't have long to live, can you tell me what you meant?' Then you can move to the Mary model to stay with the story. No fixing. Listen in the present."

In the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

More reflections on the Blog: Befrienderforum.org