

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

July 3, 2022

Old Testament Reading; Isaiah 66: 10-14

Responsive Reading; Psalm 66: 1-9

Epistle Reading; Galatians 6: 7-16

Gospel Reading; Luke 10: 1-11, 16-20

Sermon Title: **The End Justifies the Struggle**

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary; Take no Travelers Checks, no lunch box, and no cushy slippers. Stick with it and eat what you are given.

“Rejoice with America, And be glad with her, all you who love her; Rejoice for joy with her, all you who mourn for her; That you may feed and be satisfied with the consolation of her bosom, That you may drink deeply and be delighted with the abundance of her glory.”

“Make a joyful shout to God, all the Earth! Sing out honor of His name; Make His praise glorious. Say to God, ‘How awesome are Your works! Through the greatness of Your power your enemies shall submit themselves to You. All the earth shall

worship You and sing praises to You; They shall sing praises to Your name.” And “Jesus appointed seventy others [of us] and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. And Jesus said to them, ‘Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves.’”

OK, I paraphrased that a bit. I substituted America for Jerusalem but, being the 4th of July weekend, I thought it might be appropriate.

I thought that it might also be appropriate to relate that we too are sent into the world that was created by God, to be witnesses for God, to a world that is not always that happy to hear our message about God.

Oh yeah, about that message. Isaiah proposed a message at a time when things were pretty messed up in his world but, he did not concentrate on the gloom of the pending exile but looked past the turmoil to the fulfillment of God’s plan for His world and His chosen people. The Psalm reading tells us to shout for joy in spite of what we see around us because our God is an awesome God and is to be praised in advance for what is coming to us in His time.

In our Epistle lesson Paul says that we should not be deceived that how we honor God will be ignored. Paul wanted his students to realize that they needed to put God first and the world and the rules of the self -righteous behind them. To this

point he said that God was neither impressed by people being circumcised nor by people bragging that they were not circumcised. Paul was trying to make people realize that if they were trying to impress the people around them, they would reap the worthless praise of man at the expense of not fulfilling their duty to their Lord and Savior.

When Jesus sent out the seventy, He stressed that they were not to be showy or selfish. Jesus wanted them to be humble and polite to anyone who would listen to them or provide for their physical needs. He did not want them to go from house to house because that would make them appear to be fussy about who treated them the best. Lastly Jesus did not want them to be all puffed up about how people {and demons} reacted to them but to be thankful that God had given them a chance to serve Him being heirs to His heavenly kingdom. Jesus puts it, "rejoice because your names are written in heaven."

There is a big difference between knowing Jesus and knowing about Jesus. That difference can totally shift our concept of the world that we live in. Let me see if I can put this into perspective. I grew up in the shadow of my brother John C Gardner. Bud, as I called him was considered to be one of the ten best authors in the world in the seventies. Batavia claimed him as "Batavia's author" and they have a John Gardner society

through Genesee Community College and a purple bench by the Pok-A-Dot Restaurant dedicated to him.

There would be an annual John Gardner conference at GCC which would bring in scholars from around the country. They would give speeches about his life and all the scholarly things that he did. They knew more about his life and teachings than I ever will. They knew about him but they did not know him.

They never woke up as a five-year-old crying from a terrible nightmare. They never had him sit on the edge of their bed and hold them and tell them stories till the fear left them. They were never afraid of the dark and worried about what looked like a Lion's eyes looking at them from down the road and have him put them on his shoulders and take him down the road to see the bridge reflector reflecting the light from the moon. They never knew John Gardner as someone who would die for them in a heartbeat but I did.

That is how Jesus wants us to know Him. Jesus wants us to know that He is right by our side. Jesus wants us to know that He loves us so much that He did die for us and would do it again. Jesus does not want us to be frightened by the world with all its troubles, but to be reassured that He is holding our hand or carrying us on His shoulders. Jesus wants us to know that heaven is being with Him and if we realize that we are with Him now we don't have to wait to die. The end justifies the

struggle and if we know Jesus and can feel His presence, we can know that the presence of Jesus the Christ is the end. The end of our fear and the birth of hope that cancels out debilitating pain and anguish. Our names are written in heaven and Jesus has prepared a place for us there.

Hallelujah and Amen!