

## PENTECOST: IN FAITH WE RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT

**Sixth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 9)**

**July 8, 2007**

**Isaiah 66:10-14**

**Psalm 66:1-9**

**Galatians 6:[1-6] 7-16**

**Luke 10:1-11, 16-20**

### **Travel Light!**

Those who travel beyond their country's own borders would do well to travel light. Long lines, cumbersome baggage checks, heightened security measures, and the overhanging threat of danger, often make traveling for work or pleasure downright off-putting.

The pericope in Luke shows Jesus commissioning seventy-two followers to go out and share the gospel with those who had never heard its message of salvation. These followers would pave the way for Jesus as he traveled toward Jerusalem. He tells them: "Now go, but remember, I am sending you like lambs into a pack of wolves" (Luke 10:3, *CEV*). Did their caution lights go on? Could they sense impending danger? An old adage says "to be forewarned is to be forearmed." If ever there was an off-putting journey, this was it. Yet, hymn writer George Duffield, in his classic standard, "Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus," exhorts us to "let courage rise with danger" when we proclaim the gospel of Christ.

Further, Jesus tells these ambassadors of the faith not to take some of the items they would normally carry on a trip. No money, no food, no extra footwear (Luke 10:4). Travel light! This was not a luxurious vacation but a dangerous mission. How would they survive? They were to rely on God's provision, and in response to their obedience, all their needs would be met.

We, too, are challenged to take the gospel to the world. Like those seventy-two whom Jesus commissioned, we also need to travel light. Often, the creature comforts of this world dull our sense of Christian duty and make us relax while others around us die for want of the gospel. Thus, we need to shake off sloth, dispense of emotional baggage, fear and doubt, and travel light.

The sin of pride is a sneaky one. It can creep in even when our deeds start off with the purest of motives. Why did Jesus, on the return of the seventy-two, squelch their exuberance as they recounted how demons obeyed them when they invoked his name? Jesus told them: "Don't be happy because evil spirits obey you. Be happy that your names are written in heaven!" (Luke 10:20, *CEV*). Jesus was warning them against the sin of pride, and pointed them to what really mattered.

The apostle Paul in his letter to the church at Galatia also challenges his readers to rid themselves of those sins that would hamper them on their Christian journey. Get rid of pride, selfishness,

self-righteousness, bragging, and blind obedience to ritual (Galatians 6:3-4, 8), says Paul. Travel light!

Realizing how easy it is to become smug with our accomplishments as we follow Christ, Paul warns: “If someone is trapped in sin, you should gently lead that person back to the right path. But watch out, and don’t be tempted yourself...If you think you are better than others, when you really aren’t, you are wrong.... don’t compare yourself with others” (Galatians 6:1b, 3, 4b, *CEV*).

It takes moral and spiritual fortitude to “get rid of everything that slows us down, especially the sin that just won’t let go,” but “we must keep our eyes on Jesus, who leads us and makes our faith complete” (Hebrews 12:1b, 2a, *CEV*).

This week’s Reflection was prepared by Dorette Saunders who serves on the staff of the American Bible Society as Senior Editor in the Education Unit of the Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship.

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**This week we remember to pray for the work of the Bible Societies in: India** – With thanks to God for political and economic stability and for the publication of three Study Bibles, and with prayers for progress on all projects, including 95 translation projects, the production of audio and Braille Scriptures, the Radio Bible program, the preparation of Scriptures for special audiences, and for the Scriptures in Zongkhar and Tsangla for the people in Bhutan; **Maldives** – With prayers for God’s protection and encouragement in the midst of difficult circumstances and for the availability of Scriptures to all who desire them despite the restriction on organized Bible work; **Sri Lanka** – With prayers for God’s blessing on activities dedicated to differently-abled people, including a speech contest, an essay competition, a choir festival, and Bible Sunday; **Bangladesh** – With thanks to God for the launching of the revised Chin (Bawm) TAZI Bible and that it was welcomed by Christians and church leaders of all denominations, and for the publication of the Common Language Bengali and TEV English diglot New Testament, and with prayers for all translation projects.

**Activity Corner:** “Traveling Light”

Supplies needed: An old suitcase or duffle bag; Bible; several sheets of 8 ½” x11” paper; marker, pens or pencils.

Read Hebrews 12:1-3. Invite each member of your household to select two things that slow them down in their journey for Christ. Have them write each one on a sheet of paper, being sure to place the problem at the top and bottom of the paper, with their name beside it. (Each member should have two sheets). Fold each sheet in half horizontally and put it in the suitcase. Now read Galatians 6:9,10. Pray and ask God’s guidance. Open the suitcase and tear each sheet in half. (Name and problem should be on each half). Give one half to someone other than the one to whom it belongs. Ask them to pray for that family member. Pass out sheets until they are all distributed. The suitcase will now be empty. You are now “traveling light!” Conclude by singing one of your favorite hymns of praise.