

14th Sunday, Ordinary Time – Year C

In 1971 John Lennon, wrote the song *Imagine*. Lennon once explained that it was an “anti-religious, anti-nationalistic, anti-conventional, anti-capitalistic” song that got “sugar coated” into acceptability. Lennon canonized the idea that if only we could imagine a world not bound by heaven and hell, not looking to the transcendent, we could live for today and everyone would be at peace.

His proposals came at the end of each verse: “living for today” – “living life in peace” – “sharing all the world.” His final goal: “And the world will live as one.”

Today, we hear a 2,500-year-old version of something similar and yet radically different. While Lennon was suggesting that some version of socialist anarchy could solve the world’s problems, the prophet Isaiah promotes **awareness of God’s love as the way to human flourishing and joy. Lennon wants to be rid of dreams of heaven. Isaiah wants people to imagine how God’s loving power working through them can satisfy all human hungers.**

If Isaiah’s vision also sounds like a sugar-coated dream, Jesus brings the invitation down to earth as he sends the 72 evangelizers out to proclaim the reign of God. The 72 are sent out in twos: the important number is two. He lays out for them the stark realism of a prophet: “I am sending you out as lambs amidst wolves.” All they have is their partner. Their job description: Teach. “The reign of God is at hand.” Heal the broken. Again, all these 72 have is a partner.

The international fellowship of Alcoholics began in 1935 when two men, Bill W. and Dr. Bob S. met in the home of a mutual friend in Akron, Ohio. Tagged by all – spouse, friends and family, clergy and medical professionals - as hopeless alcoholics, these two men helped each other by sharing each other’s experience, strength and hope. AA and many other 12 step fellowships are based on the principle that **alcoholics and addicts stay clean and sober by reaching out to others and giving away what they have been given – another’s support.**

People who evangelize by their presence are recognizable first by their freedom. They can hang out with anyone, without concern for what others might think or say. They notice needs and respond to them with whatever power they have. They aren’t anti-establishment as much as they are utterly unimpressed by power, prestige and glittery stuff. They live in today, knowing that tomorrow is beyond their control and that the future holds invincible promise.

Lambs among wolves? Without a doubt, but they are convinced that concern for their own hide only ties them down. They have learned to imagine a world where everyone can flourish because it starts happening wherever they show up. If people reject their message, there is no argument, no revenge, they just dust off their shoes and move on. Imagine that! Imagine this: God is good...all the time.