

DAY 15: FRIDAY

## *Vulnerability Begins at Home*

These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, proclaim the good news, ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment. Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for laborers deserve their food.

Matthew 10:5-15

### **Reflect**

In this part of Jesus’ experiment with inviting others into relationship with God, his disciples are expected to improvise—to heal and restore, as well as spread the good news—all without a change of clothes or money for the bus!

By relying entirely on the kindness (or pity) of the people they encountered on the way, these friends of Jesus were helping those they met to reveal the kingdom of heaven already within them. In the disciples’ intentional weakness, they summoned forth habits of hospitality and mutual aid.

But it couldn’t have been easy. Consider that Jesus sent the disciples only to their own people. That might have made things easier—visiting relatives and speaking with those who share a language. But it can be simpler to ask strangers for help, especially when, if you are refused, you can turn your back and walk away without looking back.

These instructions weren’t a permanent ordinance. Before the end of his life, Jesus would give different instructions, and in this age of resurrection, those seeking to be disciples are sent into all the world, not just their own

backyards. But perhaps we need to learn the lesson again. It is not hard to find the stories of Christian missionaries taking full advantage of hospitality, being welcomed into the house, and then taking it for themselves, lording it over the people they were sent to bless. This imperial Christianity is a complete reversal of what Jesus was teaching—tender, tentative expressions of trust. Can we learn this lesson of vulnerability and mutual aid, bringing peace where it is welcomed?

### **Ponder**

- Is it easier for you to be vulnerable in your own community or among strangers?
- Being part of a community can make it hard to take an unpopular stance. Those naming oppressive dynamics, like racism or sexism, are often seen as stirring the pot or being divisive. When do you hold back rather than speaking up? What helps you have courage?

### **Pray**

Holy One, you express your love for us in vulnerability, even death on a cross. You invite us to follow you into vulnerability, even the vulnerability of love. Help us to let go of our need for certainty, for answers, for security, for self-sufficiency. Help us to be part of your Spirit's move through history to provide security, sufficiency, and justice for all people, from all people. In the name of Jesus, our guide and our hope. Amen.

### **Practise**

The practice of vulnerability is a difficult and rewarding one. Try imagining a conversation with a trusted person you would like to be closer to. Sketch out some simple confessions:

*Sometimes I feel...*

*I don't like it when...*

*I am afraid of...*

Then jot down the supportive and welcoming answer you would want to hear. Practise offering that answer when someone confides in you—and consider asking them if they would be willing to read your script.

*Peter Haresnape*