

## **Contents**

### **Pentecost 6**

*“Whoever listens to you  
listens to me, and whoever  
rejects you rejects me, and  
whoever rejects me rejects  
the one who sent me.”*

**Contributor:**

**D. Andrew Kille**

editor@bibleworkbench.org

	<b>Page</b>
1. Lectionary Selection Luke 10:1-11, 16-20	96
2. Exploring the Pattern	97
3. Reading Between the Lines	102
4. Parallel Readings	104
From:	
<i>The Analects</i>	
<i>The Power of Spirit</i>	
<i>Soul Food</i>	
5. Critical Background	109
Richard W. Swanson	

**• Lectionary Readings (Year C)**

***Revised Common Lectionary***

First Reading	11 Kings 5:1-14 or Isaiah 66:10-14
Second Reading	Galatians 6:(1-6)
Gospel	<b>Luke 10:1-11, 16-21</b>
Psalm	30 or 66:1-9

## At the Workbench: Pentecost 6; Proper 9

### **Luke 10:1-11 [12-15], 16-20**

1 After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs  
2 to every town and place where he himself intended to go. He said to them, "The  
3 harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to  
4 send out laborers into his harvest. Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like  
5 lambs into the midst of wolves. Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one  
6 on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!' And if  
7 anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not,  
8 it will return to you. Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they  
9 provide, for the laborer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to  
10 house. Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set  
11 before you; cure the sick who are there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has  
12 come near to you.' But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go  
13 out into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we  
14 wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near.'

15 *[I tell you, on that day it will be more tolerable for Sodom than for that town.*

16 *"Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the deeds of power done*  
17 *in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago,*  
18 *sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But at the judgment it will be more tolerable for*  
19 *Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to*  
20 *heaven?*

21 *No, you will be brought down to Hades.]*

22 "Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever  
23 rejects me rejects the one who sent me."

24 The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, in your name even the demons submit to  
25 us!" He said to them, "I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. See, I  
26 have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the  
27 enemy; and nothing will hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits  
28 submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

## *Exploring the Pattern: Themes and Motifs*

### 1. *After this the Lord appointed seventy others*

Once again, Luke links this story to the previous one with the words *after this*. Recall what Luke has just described:

*As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." But Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." Another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home." Jesus said to him, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God." [Luke 9:57-62]*

If you were writing one of the summary subtitles that you often find in some editions of the Bible, what would you name this previous section?

What do the conversations between Jesus and these unnamed people tell us about how these people relate to Jesus? About how Jesus relates to them?

Luke ends each conversation with Jesus' words. What do you imagine that each of these people might say in reply?

Do they end up following Jesus? Why or why not?

## At the Workbench: Pentecost 6; Proper 9

*After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go.*

The fact that the number seventy is often used in the Bible as a symbol of completion and that the early manuscripts don't agree whether the number is seventy or seventy-two suggests that Luke is not reporting a precise census.

What does a group of *seventy* suggest to you? How large a group is it?

Who might these *others* be? Where did they come from? Why have they come?

Are the traditional twelve apostles among them? Who else might be included in the *seventy*?

*He said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."*

What might this *harvest* be? What might these *laborers* be called upon to do?

As this group is gathered together listening to Jesus' instruction, they are thinking what? One of them turns to the man beside him and says,

“ \_\_\_\_\_ ”

Jesus tells them they are to travel how? What are they to leave behind? What are they to anticipate? What are they to do?

How might Jesus' instructions strike these people who are being sent out *like lambs into the midst of wolves*? What questions might they have? What hopes? Expectations? Fears?

## Exploring the Pattern: Themes and Motifs

Luke 10:1-11, 16-20 • July 4, 2010

2. *The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!"*

Luke tells us nothing specifically about the experiences of the *seventy*. How long do you imagine they have been on their way to *every town and place where he himself intended to go*? What might they have encountered there? How might they have been feeling at the beginning of their assignment? After a few days?

How might their reception in the towns have changed during their journey?

What reports might they have heard about others of the *seventy*?

What might lead them to return *with joy*? What other emotions might some of them be feeling?

*He said to them, "I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."*

What might Luke want us to understand from this story about Jesus' work and the work of his followers? Paraphrase Jesus' response. In your own words, Jesus is saying:

" \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ "

3. Where have you seen a leader—a boss at work, a teacher at school, a group leader in your church, a coach on the football field or basketball court, a commander on the field of battle—preparing a group to take on a challenging task?

## At the Workbench: Pentecost 6; Proper 9

---

What steps does that leader take to equip the group?

What spirit, drive, or commitment does the leader seek to draw out of the group members?

What support does the leader give, or how does the leader enable the group to find the resources needed to complete the task?

What do you know of a time that you yourself have been part of such a group? How did you feel about tackling the challenge set before you?

How did your relationship with the leader shape your expectations or fears?

If you were able to complete the task, how did you feel?

4. Where, in your inner world, are there “towns” and places that need to be healed, that need to hear that the kingdom of God has come near? What might be the signs of that kingdom? What within you needs to seek out those places, bring that healing, and make that proclamation?

What needs to be left behind to make this inward journey?

---

## Exploring the Pattern: Themes and Motifs

---

Luke 10:1-11, 16-20 • July 4, 2010

How must these places be ready to welcome the message? To nurture it?

When might it be time to “shake off the dust” and move on?

## *Reading Between the Lines*

Jesus sends the seventy out for the first time. His instructions are clear and demanding. They are sent as *lambs into the midst of wolves*, carrying nothing extra, no money, and they are not to greet others and thus find allies and friends. They are to stay where invited and eat whatever is put before them. They are to stay in the same house the whole time they are there. No looking for upgrades. They are to announce that the kingdom of God has come near. There will be those who rather than welcome them are going to reject them. We are told that from this hard and demanding journey the seventy return *with joy*. They tell Jesus how the demons have submitted to them. Jesus tells them that he has given them power over snakes and scorpions and that the enemy powers will not hurt them. Jesus listens to their noisy joy and responds by telling them not to rejoice in any of this but only because their names are written in heaven. How do you imagine the seventy feel when Jesus responds as he does? What have they been missing? What does Jesus really want from them? What do you know of generously spending yourself on others—giving yourself away to the needy and broken—braving hardship to minister to the least of the brethren only to find that the joy at the end of the day is not enough? What is Jesus telling them and us about the rewards and joys of announcing the kingdom and curing the sick?

[bdols@bibleworkbench.org](mailto:bdols@bibleworkbench.org)

*Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves.*

*Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals, and greet no one on the road.*

Reflect on the last time you took a trip. What did you pack? How much money did you take? What arrangements did you make ahead of time for your safety, security, and comfort?

What is the cost of such baggage? The promise?

What might it be like to travel without those things? What might it be like to depend only on the hospitality of those around you?

What would your inner life look like if, in your outer life, you were traveling lighter?

What one thing could you do today to lighten your luggage? What would be the cost of not carrying so much? The promise?

[bharrison@bibleworkbench.org](mailto:bharrison@bibleworkbench.org)

## *Reading Between the Lines*

The critical reading “The World of Luke’s Story” confines its exploration of the number 70 to the New Testament. However, if those in the first century heard 70 and not 72 or something else, they would have understood it with Old Testament ears.

In the 22 letter Hebrew alphabet, each letter has a numerical value. Assigning such values is not uncommon. For example, the Romans used some of their letters (I, V, X, L, C, D, M) as numerals.

In Hebrew, the numerical value of a word is determined by adding up the values of each letter. Because of this system of assigning numerical values to letters, every word has a numerical value. There is an entire discipline of Jewish mysticism known as Gematria that is devoted to finding hidden meanings in the numerical values of word.

That brings us to the number 70 in this week’s reading. It is a combination of two perfect numbers, seven and ten. That means 7 x 10 signifies *perfect* spiritual order carried out with all spiritual power and significance.

Other understandings of 70 from different sources include:

- ♦ 70 nations that peopled the earth after the flood in Genesis.
- ♦ Moses chose seventy elders as rulers over the people (Numbers 11:16).
- ♦ The Sanhedrin is the Jewish Supreme Court. It had 70 members plus the High Priest as chairman and ex-officio member.
- ♦ 70 may also refer to Gentile nations or being in exile in one of those nations. Jacob went to settle in Egypt with his family of 70 people (Genesis 46:27).
- ♦ The number 12 (the Jewish nation) and 70, which stands for the other nations, sometimes appear together. In Exodus 15:27 (and Numbers 33:9) the 12 springs point to the promised land which was established from the 12 sons of Jacob, while the 70 palm trees point back to the land of Egypt which the Israelites had now left.
- ♦ The Babylonian exile lasted 70 years (2 Chron. 36:21, Jeremiah 25:11, 29:10, Daniel 9:2, Zechariah 1:12, 7:4).

What new resonances does *the seventy* now take on for you?

*Caren Goldman*  
cgoldman@bibleworkbench.org

---

## *Parallel Readings*

### **From *The Analects of Confucius***

#### *Chapter 9.10*

Yen Hui said with a deep sigh, "The more I strain my eyes up towards it, the higher it soars. The deeper I bore down into it, the harder it becomes. I see it in front; but suddenly it is behind. Step by step the Master skillfully lures one on. He has broadened me with culture, restrained me with ritual. Even if I wanted to stop, I could not. Just when I feel that I have exhausted every resource, something seems to rise up, standing out sharp and clear. Yet though I long to pursue it, I can find no way of getting to it at all.

Confucius

### **From *The Power of Spirit***

#### *InterActive*

Specifications for a desired future state, if the future is to be different from the present and immediate past, are not difficult to prescribe. Spirit must assume the form of an open system, operating among other open systems, all within the largest open system, the cosmos itself. I call this the InterActive Organization, and it is the organizational equivalent of the individual Soul. No longer turning inward to fix the system, the focus of Spirit turns outward to embrace the environment. And that embrace is not one of hostility and fear, protecting what is "mine" and "ours," as against "yours" and "theirs." For the simple truth of an open system is that we are all in it together. It is a world of leaky boundaries and interconnections, where distinctions are noted usually only in their dissolution.

It is also a world where chaos is no stranger, but rather the constant precursor of new order. Even as the environment must be embraced, so must chaos. This is the fecund ground of new creation, new organization. This is the world of self-organizing systems.

Under the circumstances, eternal structures and unchanging organizations are a thing of the past. The absence of change will become the major worry, for it means the end of life. In this context, control is a sometime thing. Here today and gone tomorrow, relinquished without anxiety and pain, but rather with something approaching joy. To embrace chaos is to lose

Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius*, Arthur Waley, trans., (New York: Random House, 1938).

Harrison Owen, *The Power of Spirit: How Organizations Transform*, (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2000), pp. 102-105. Reprinted with permission.

control, and that is the precondition for birth and new growth.

Strange new world indeed. But if it happened, what would it be like? Among other things, I think we would find that the environmental crisis would turn from disaster into enormous opportunity. As we address the wounds of our planet we would discover new ways of being human that go vastly beyond the confines of a nine-to-five world with [illusory] job security, performing tasks that have lost their meaning. At a deeper level, we would know that wounding the planet is wounding ourselves. It is not just wrong, it is crazy.

On a more personal level, we would discover that in a world constantly in flux between chaos and order, the possibility for innovation and personal fulfillment is unending. No longer blocked by the way things were, we might playfully create the new. In a curious way work becomes play, and play becomes work. Not just a reversal of roles, but a blending of effect. Call it High Learning.

And for businesses, I think it would be wonderful. The day of the limited, finite market would be over, for in open systems there are no firm boundaries. Fighting for market share would become a ridiculous occupation, for a percentage of infinity is still infinity. Expansion and growth are limited only by our perceptions.

Sound good? Actually, I rather expect that to many it sounds like Pollyannaish chatter, suitable for nursery rhymes and fairy tales, but scarcely possible in the world as we know it. And that is just the point. Moving on, while attempting to maintain our present conception of the world and ourselves, is impossible. A change in conception, consciousness if you like, is essential.

### *Inspired*

Before going more deeply into the transformative events of the present, we should complete the picture of the evolution of organizational consciousness. The InterActive Organization is not the end of the tale, if the analogy to the individual's transformational journey holds. Even as the individual may pass from Soul to Spirit, so I think the InterActive Organization will give way to the *Inspired Organization*. Clearly we aren't there yet, even a little bit, and given the pressure of the moment, it may be argued that such pie-in-the-sky speculations are of marginal utility. All true, but if it should turn out (as I suspect) that we are already well along the transformational journey to InterActivity, it may be useful to glimpse the next mountain top.

So what is the Inspired Organization, and why would we want to get there? Baldly stated, the Inspired Organization is organization without form. It is pure Spirit. To admit the obvious, this sounds like pure oxymoron. But I think we can intuit what it might be like, and indeed, there are moments in our common experience when we might actually get there, if only for a moment.

*... we would discover that in a world constantly in flux between chaos and order, the possibility for innovation and personal fulfillment is unending.*

For example, consider those times out of time when perhaps we had the privilege of attending the performance of a symphony orchestra. What started out as just another evening of Bach or Beethoven turned into a moment of pure magic. The stuffiness of the concert hall was transfigured into the elixir smell of open fields and mountain ranges. Hard seats dissolved until we hardly noticed them. Separate components of the orchestra were no longer separate, and it didn't seem to matter what was being played, or who was playing what—it was all one seamless experience. Call it magic, hallucination, or nothing at all, but it is what I might imagine inspired organization to be. Forms and structure just seem to fall away, and one is left with the pure essence of music.

If the symphony orchestra is not your thing, you might want to remember those moments from world-class athletics when something similar seems to happen. For me it was the golden days of U.S. basketball, when Larry Bird and Magic Johnson danced together. Yes, I know it was another clash between the Lakers and the Celtics, but somehow the score didn't seem to be the most important thing. Bird and Johnson pushed each other higher and higher past the normal forms of play. "Technical excellence" became a limp descriptor for what quickly became infinitely more than technique and a whole new understanding of excellence. Words just fail, but they always do when we experience the rarified heights of inspired performance. Or may we call it Inspired Organization?

And why would we want to get there? I guess the answer to that is pretty obvious, for I firmly believe there lies in the heart of each of us the dream that somehow we might transcend the formal limitations of our lives. Which brings us back to the good old InterActive Organization. As good as it is, and it certainly beats life in the ProActive Organization, it does have its limitations. Even though we may be constantly changing form in response to the multiple gifts of chaos, it's still form. Wouldn't it be wonderful to get beyond all that? Just to exist in our essence without the necessity to be any particular thing at all? And who knows, one of these days we may actually get there, but not now. For the present we have some pretty exciting times on our hands, and not a few moments of genuine anxiety.

Harrison Owen

### **From *Soul Food***

#### *Letting Go into Our Freedom*

Letting go is the essence of the spiritual life, the heart of spiritual practice. Beginning to let go brings an immediate and profound revelation. Only when we are no longer full of opinions and expectations are we truly receptive. Only when we are no

Jack Kornfield and Christina Feldman, Eds., *Soul Food: Stories to Nourish the Spirit and the Heart*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1996), pp. 309-311.

longer afraid of loss do we begin to open in a wholehearted way to the world around us. In the discovery of aloneness is the discovery of what it means to be truly together with others. Letting go is an expression of compassion for ourselves and of love for the universe we live in.

In traveling this path of inner transformation, we are encouraged to let go of everything, to relinquish every form of clinging. We are encouraged to let go of preoccupations with the past, investment in the future, and clinging in the present. We are encouraged to renounce our images, expectations, fears, and guilt. We are taught that holding is the path to limitation, letting go the direct path to awakening. This letting go is what allows us to be fully present here rather than occupied with what was or what we hope for.

It may feel like a severe and formidable teaching. We may wonder if there will be anything of meaning left to us after this letting go. We may fear that we will be left passionless, empty, and directionless when we have let go of everything that used to define us. We have learned to equate being without with deprivation and being alone with loneliness. If this total letting go is the price of freedom, we may doubt if we are prepared or even able to pay it. Yet our openness repays us at every step.

In spiritual life there is no room for compromise. Awakening is not negotiable; we cannot bargain to hold on to things that please us while relinquishing things that do not matter to us. A lukewarm yearning for awakening is not enough to sustain us through the difficulties involved in letting go. It is important to understand that anything that can be lost was never truly ours, anything that we deeply cling to only imprisons us.

The spiritual life is to learn the joy of letting go, and this great art serves us in any circumstance, so we may meet both the robber in our own cave and the inevitable changes in our life with grace. Letting go allows us to live wisely. Life is inevitably a process of letting go into greater and greater capacities of being, from infant to child, adolescent to adult. Letting go of our fears and habits allows a more spacious wisdom to emerge. Moving through this changing world and letting go of the beliefs, the attachments, the fixed sense of ourselves one day at a time is to travel with a graceful and spacious heart. To release the old is to allow the new to be born. This is freedom.

When we see clearly, we discover that we are never actually the owners, the possessors, of the things in our life. Our homes, the things we call mine, even our children are here with us only for a time. We live in relationship to them either skillfully and wisely or graspingly and unwisely. Even our bodies do not belong to us. They are gifts, which will change and eventually need to be released in their own way. Their changing cycles reflect the very nature of the world. We cannot possess them nor can we stop them. We are asked to relate wisely to them and all things, not by holding and possessing but by loving. To do this is to let go one moment at a time in a spirit of love and

*When we see clearly, we discover that we are never actually the owners, the possessors, of the things in our life.*

## **At the Workbench: Pentecost 6; Proper 9**

---

respect. When we learn to be truly present, we discover that what we deeply seek has always been with us.

The joy expressed by the stories of this chapter is the same joy we will find as we let go. In reading these stories, we might reflect on what is hardest for us to let go of and why. What do we need to let go of in order to live more freely? Where do we cling to ideas and expectations that keep us from fully loving those around us? What do we possess that keeps us from being free? Can we imagine what changes would occur if we let go?

Jack Kornfield and Christina Feldman

## Critical Background

### From *Provoking the Gospel of Luke*

#### *Ritual Text: The Life of the Worshiping Community*

The focus of most interpretations of this scene is on the mission of the seventy who are sent out. This is a good focus. Their mission, and the success of that mission, makes it clear that authority and responsibility are dispersed in this movement of God in the world. That is good to know.

But it is also important to notice that the terms under which Jesus sends the seventy out presuppose that the host of Israel (to whom they are sent) will practice the rituals of hospitality. This is crucial. Israel emerged out of a nomadic culture in the deep ancient past. The practices proper to such a culture shape the oldest stories in the Bible. They also shape the ethics that govern Jewish life. Honoring father and mother is a good idea anywhere and in any culture, but in a culture that roams, following the movements of the herds of sheep, such honor and care are essential. There is no community other than the clan group to provide support for aging parents. Likewise here, the rigors of a wandering life make it necessary that all wanderers treat each other with honor and hospitality whenever their peregrinations bring them together. Guests are to be welcomed, Hebrews says (echoing past practices long since vanished), because some have thus entertained angels unaware.

When Jesus sends the seventy out to the host of Israel, he expects them to be welcomed and rejected. Interpretation of this scene goes awry when this welcome and rejection are assumed to be related to acceptance of Jesus and his mission. In Luke's story, that comes later. When interpreters get this order inverted, they provide fuel for the fire in which violent Christians like to burn those who disagree with them. It is time that we stopped providing such fuel. Jesus expects welcome and rejection, which is to say that he expects that some in the host of Israel will remember their ancient duty to protect and provide for the wanderers among them, and he expects that others will not. Those who do not remember their ancient duties, given them when they were nomads, preserved among them as responsibilities given to the people of God, those who forget these responsibilities are to be rejected in return. "Not even the dust of your city will we accept as a gift from you since you do not remember what it means to be the people of God."

It all comes down to the rituals of hospitality.

Richard W. Swanson,  
*Provoking the Gospel of Luke:  
A Storyteller's Commentary,*  
Year C, (Cleveland OH:  
The Pilgrim Press, 2006),  
pp. 157-161.

### *Intra-Text: The World of Luke's Story*

It is, of course, not worth worrying over the number of messengers who are sent out. It could be seventy. It could be seventy-two. There is not a solid textual reason to choose one over the other.

*Already this scene mirrors the scene at the beginning of chapter 9 when Jesus sent out twelve messengers with a similar mission.*

But it might be fascinating if it were seventy. Already this scene mirrors the scene at the beginning of chapter 9 when Jesus sent out twelve messengers with a similar mission. That there should be exactly twelve messengers rings all sorts of symbolic bells: there are twelve apostles for the same reason that there are twelve tribes of Israel. Even after the ten tribes were lost at the time of the Assyrian destruction of the Northern Kingdom (722 BCE), still Israel is composed, for all apocalyptic purposes, of twelve whole tribes who will be gathered together when the culmination of all things comes upon the creation. If seventy are sent in chapter 10, the gathering might now include also the Gentiles, since there are (traditionally) seventy Gentile nations. But Jesus is sending these messengers into Jewish cities as he travels up to Jerusalem, the Jewish center of the world. But the number would hint that there is a link to the whole mixed world of Gentiles who know little and care less about Israel and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But the criterion used to include or exclude in this scene is fulfillment of the responsibility to carry out hospitality, which stands as a proper sign of Torah observance. But Gentiles are those who, by definition, need not observe Torah (beyond the basic Noachide laws that come down to something like: Don't be a barbarian and don't live like an idiot) and cannot observe Torah. It is not a matter of a defect in virtue; we simply lack the practice.

Luke is up to something.

### *Inter-Text: The World We Think We Live In*

The Revised Common Lectionary omits the middle of this scene, and in doing so, omits the allusion that clarifies this scene. Woes are pronounced on cities that have not offered a welcome to Jesus and his movement, but before those woes comes a reference to Sodom, the city that exemplifies the refusal of the duty of hospitality.

Wanderers are to be treated as family, welcomed, and fed. They are to be protected even above family. This is the principle behind actions in the oldest stories, actions that are offensive and unimaginable in any other context. Thus it was that when the citizens of Sodom sought to abuse and humiliate guests in Lot's house, he offered to them his daughters instead. This is inconceivable in any social system except one that places the responsibility for hospitality even above one's responsibility to immediate family. This old offensive story also reveals painful truths about the place of women in patri-

archal societies, and the pain of these truths must be registered if biblical interpretation is to be responsible. But even then, remember that hospitality is at stake. Remember that hospitality was an obligation beyond all others.

Listen to these interpretations out of the ancient world:

The Sodomites, overweeningly proud of their numbers and the extent of their wealth, showed themselves insolent to men and impious to the Divinity, insomuch that they no more remembered the benefits that they had received from him, hated foreigners and declined all intercourse with others. Indignant at this conduct, God accordingly resolved to chastise them for their arrogance. (Josephus, *Antiquities* 1:194-95)

The men of Sodom waxed haughty only on account of the good which the Holy One, blessed be He, had lavished upon them. . . . They said: Since there cometh forth bread out of (our) earth, and it hath the dust of gold, why should we suffer wayfarers, who come to us only to deplete our wealth. Come, let us abolish the practice of traveling in our land. (Babylonian Talmud, tractate Sanhedrin 109a)

This was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy. (Ezekiel 16:49)

If the expectation is that those who show proper hospitality, those who make it clear that they remember the responsibility that goes with being Israel, will be roused by the nearness of the dominion of God, then once again Luke has made this a story about the solidity of the faithful people of God. Luke has found faithful Jews among the tax gatherers. He has found faithful Jews among the non-observant. Now he expects to find whole towns that practice Torah with all their might, whole towns that are living lives that expect God's dominion. Remember, this is a story about the creation of a "people prepared." And he expects to find towns that are not. Remember, this is a story about division and distinctions.

### *Provoking the Story*

If the criterion for membership in the people of God in this scene is the practice of hospitality, consider this story out of Eastern Europe. Yaffa Eliach tells of the slaughter of the Jews of Eishyshok on Rosh Hashanna in 1941. One boy, a sixteen-year-old named Zvi, survived by timing the shots and falling into the ditch a split second before the bullet hit him. He lay in the ditch, buried with the dead and dying, waiting for night-

*. . . once again Luke has made this a story about the solidity of the faithful people of God.*

## **At the Workbench: Pentecost 6; Proper 9**

---

fall. When night came, he worked his way out of the mass of bodies and, naked and covered with blood, knocked on doors in the town looking for someone who would help him. "Jew, go back to the grave where you belong," was the response at house after house. Finally, he came to the home of a widow who lived near the forest. She, too, attempted to drive him away. "I am your Lord, Jesus Christ," said Zvi. "I came down from the cross. Look at me—the blood, the pain, the suffering of the innocent. Let me in." The door was opened.

Richard W. Swanson