

Luke 10:1-12,16-20
Pentecost 4; July 6 & 7, 2025

His name was Cher Ami—and he was their last hope. It was the afternoon of October 4, 1918. The group of soldiers known as the “Lost Battalion,” led by U.S. Army Major Charles Whittlesey, had lost their way in the Argonne Forest along the Western Front. Surrounded by German forces, they were trapped with no clear path to safety. Then things took a devastating turn—they came under heavy artillery fire from their own side. With radio communication down, the only way to send a message to stop the bombardment was the old-fashioned way. Attempts to resupply the battalion by airdrop failed. As every runner dispatched by the major, they would become lost or ran into German patrols. Every effort to send a message of help failed. That’s when the Major turned to Cher Ami.

The journey would be high risk. It would require navigating difficult and dangerous terrain. There were no guarantees he would make it. Sure enough, along the way, Ami took a hit and fell to the ground, but that did not stop him. He got back up and kept going. Finally, wounded, and weary, he successfully made it to base camp and delivered the message. The message - *“We are along the road parallel 276.4. Our own artillery is dropping a barrage directly on us. For heaven’s sake stop it.”* They corrected their target and redirected fire at the enemy. The precise coordinates helped the army find and rescue the lost battalion. Ami was celebrated as a hero, but it came with a cost. His injuries led to an amputated right leg, severe damage to his chest, and the end of his military service. He died eight months later after returning to the United States.

One more detail: Cher Ami was a messenger pigeon. (You can find him today preserved in one of the Smithsonian Museums in Washington, DC. He was among the hundreds of homing pigeons employed by the US Army during WWI. His name means *“dear friend”* in French. For the men in that battalion, Ami was certainly a *dear friend* who saved their lives and did his small part of winning freedom for them. ⁱ



Freedom – On a weekend like this (Independence Day), we have heard a lot about freedom. We have celebrated that freedom. Yet, the freedom that we celebrated in our country did not come cheap. For nearly 250 years, there have been people who have sacrificed their lives for the freedom that we enjoy today in our country. We can enjoy the freedom to worship the true God. We can proclaim the sacrifice that God made when he gave us his Son. He gave Jesus into death so that through him, my sins are forgiven. For in Jesus we have a freedom that only God can give.

Yet, many of the names of the people, who sacrificed themselves, have been lost in history. Yet, the freedom that they have won for us should not be forgotten. Most of us would agree that the life a single pigeon is relatively insignificant. Yet, this one pigeon performed a service which saved many human lives. There are a lot of people who wonder about the value of their own lives. They struggle to find meaning in their work, wondering if they really have anything significant to offer. Yet, God has told us that we all have value in this world. This morning, we see how God used 72 relatively insignificant people in his plan of saving this world. Luke writes: **“After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.”**

Who were those 72 people? We do not know any of their names. We do not hear about them again. We do not even know exactly where Jesus sent them. But maybe that is part of Jesus’ plan. Like so many unnamed messenger pigeons of World War 1, the fact that Luke leaves them unnamed is encouraging. When Cher Ami was sent, he was sent to deliver a message. It was an important message. It is that message that made his relatively insignificant life incredibly valuable to the people he served. Suddenly, this pigeon was included in the mission.

God does not just send people to foreign countries. He does not just send people to do professional church work. He sends people to all their various vocations to proclaim his praise and bring comfort to people around them. He sends them out with a message. **“When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ If someone who promotes peace is**

there, your peace will rest on them.” He sends them out on a mission of peace with a message of peace. Not peace as the world conceives of it. This peace is spoken throughout the pages of Scripture.

God assures his people through the prophet Isaiah that he will bring peace to his people. **“I will extend peace to her like a river, and the wealth of nations like a flooding stream.”** (Isaiah 66:10) Luke emphasizes this mission throughout his Gospel. His peace would be announced by angels. **“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”** (Luke 2:14) It was proclaimed by old men. **“Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations.”** (Luke 2:29-31) It is peace that comes through the resurrected Lord. **“He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”** (Luke 24:46-48) It is this peace that is the center of the mission that we have been given. The final goal of the message is simple: **“rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”** May God use every one of us to send out His message of peace. You are forgiven. You are right with God. You are a child of God. You are the people of God. You have eternity ahead of you with God. That’s a freedom with celebrating. Amen.

ⁱ https://www.si.edu/object/cher-ami%3Anmah_425415