Go and Be Present and then
Proclaim the Gospel by David Fitch (Northern Seminary)

**Luke 10: 1-16**

As we enter our neighborhoods, let us observe, listen, discern. Let us sit, eat among one another in our neighborhoods, and carefully noticing the social dynamics. Let us ask questions and listen. Let us prayerfully discern. Let us look for the following dynamics. In each dynamic let us discern His presence at work, goodness, flourishing, generosity, cooperative spirit, the beginnings of something new at work in the neighborhood. Here we can celebrate and join in and support as part of the gospel. Let us also notice where there is wrong, evil, sin, brokenness, oppression. Here too, we proclaim the gospel. In each space, even when we face violence, ensconced oppression, hate, let us look for how God is working in brokenness for His Kingdom. Let us proclaim the kingdom and respond. Bring hope that God is at work here through Christ if we can just see and follow. Resist evil, refuse violence, be present with the oppressed. If we are present long enough, God will bring down strongholds, He will reconcile, forgive and renew through Jesus Christ.

The gospel is that God has fulfilled His promise (to Israel) to put the world right in and through Jesus Christ (1 Cor 15:25). He reigns. The Kingdom has begun. He sits at the right hand slowly (opening the seals one at a time) through His presence bringing in His Kingdom. Let us open space for the proclamation of the gospel. Let us resist evil, make space to expose false power. We have been given His Spirit. His authority goes with us. Let us therefore discern with Him what He is doing and witness to it. Let us see ‘Satan falling like lightning’ as the gospel is proclaimed and people enter in to his Kingdom.

Discern the following dynamics for the opening of space for the proclaiming of the gospel.

1.) **Power:** (\textit{“go as sheep among wolves” vs. 3}) Discern who is in power. Where (what places) the power resides. Discern how power works. Is it coercive or participatory, holding back evil or infused with/using evil to accomplish tasks, which is always abusive? Ask questions, how do things get done here? If there’s a problem, an evil, who do you talk to? What do you do? Where are the churches in town? The center of town? Are they closed? Are there signs of Christianity’s influence in town, city hall? What is the gospel for these places?

2.) **Paintings:** (as you go along the way, take careful notice ...v. 3) ... Every culture has symbols, artifacts, visual aural cinematic etc., that point to, gather and reinforce people around meanings. We are used to corporate logos’s, we remember the swastika of Nazi Germany in the war films of WW2, we are familiar with words when they take on significance ‘black power.’ These are all signs that must be read and understood, not just on what they means on the surface, but how they motivate, indeed shape the imagination of the people that see, uses and subconsciously act of these symbols of life and meaning. What are the symbols that center this place? Where do people go to fund their imaginations? What music do people here distinctively listen to? What symbols, logos, paintings appear again and again. We ponder these pieces of art so we can ask where are the signs of God working in this place, but also recognize where the hurts and deep pains of this place are and how they have become part of understanding the meanings of life. We do all of this to ask how do these things point us to the gospel and what God is doing to redeem the world in Jesus Christ.
3.) Pennies: (“take no purse” vs 4) Where is the money in this place? Who has it? Who doesn’t? What is the relation between the places/people that have money and those that don’t. What is the gospel for this place in relation to money, God’s provision, the way God works to supply all our needs?

4.) Postures/Positioning: (“When you enter a place, read people ...vs. 5,6) Read the way people relate to each other. Notice facial expressions, body language toward another person or in a group. Notice who sits with who in restaurants, bars, bus stops, laundramats. How do people see each other? The person behind the counter? The waiter/waitress? The cross walk guard? The teacher at the school entrance. What is the posture of the police person as they walk by you? Read the antagonisms at work in this place. When you see blue ribbons on the street lamps, who put them there? Why? How do they position themselves in relation to their neighbors, the police, the alder(wo)man, the leaders in youth sports, the gang leaders. What are the antagonisms the drive this community? Race, Education, Gender, Economics What is the gospel for this place?

5.) Peace: (“seek persons of peace” vs. 6) Where do people meet and overcome difference? Where are the ‘cosmopolitan canopies’ (Elijah Anderson) in this neighborhood where people can gather, let down their defenses, let the walls down. Some call these ‘third spaces.’ Who is here? Why are they here? What is happening in the conversations? Do people talk? What plans have actually been hatched in these places? What is the gospel in these places?

6.) Parties: (“Stay there eating and drinking” vs 7) Where are the celebrations? Where do people hang out and share joy over achievements, getting through the week, new babies, survival? What are they celebrating? Are block parties encouraged? Why or why not? How is God present here? What is the gospel here?

7.) Pain: (“Heal the sick who are there”vs. 9) Where are the hurts? The struggles? The brokenness? Where do those who struggle with alcohol, drugs, prejudice, domestic violence, unemployed go? Who has died suddenly in suicide, war, on the streets? Where are the places of grief? Who is in the bars? At what times of the day? Where do the homeless go? What social services are available and where? How are people treated? Where are the churches in all this? What is the gospel (in its various contextual forms) for all these places and people?

8.) Plots: What the stories behind this place? the myths that drive a neighborhood? the stories we tell our selves to make sense of our lives, what is important, how this came to be important, what is involved in participating in this story? Ex. The story of baseball, youth baseball in Westmont.

9.) Parades: Rituals. Regular pageantries that the town gathers around that unite in it meaning and purpose.

10.) Prejudices: What are the cultures here? Who are the majority culture? Who are the minority culture(s)? How do cultures interact, or do they? What are the stories behind how various people groups got here? How they look and see each other?