

Grace Lutheran Community, 18 June 2023:

Third Sunday After Pentecost

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The sermon text for today is based on the text

Matthew 9:35 – 10:8

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When it comes to the way you see things – would you say you are a glass half empty or a glass half full sort of person? What about when you think of our Lutheran Church – we are told far too often that we are an aging church but how do you see it? We often lament that there are so many unchurched people in this great nation along with our sisters and brothers in New Zealand who are experiencing the same. We often get a good dose of how statistics show that many who are born into a Lutheran home no longer attend worship or if they do it is only at Easter and Christmas. How do you see our church and our society? Are we more godless than in Noah's time?

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

When we hear the word of the Lord today are we not moved to action? To love others more? To serve them? To bring the word of Jesus to comfort them and to share that there is forgiveness in Christ?

Jesus doesn't complain about the people who are not attending the temple, nor does He say that the average age of the temple attendees is quite old, rather when He saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

Jesus the good shepherd lives in you and me. His word grows in us and by His spirit we are empowered to speak and live the truth Jesus Christ to all in all places and spaces the Lord leads us.

Do we have compassion on those around? Are our hearts filled with love for them when we see how lost so many are?

Do we see that the people are in need of a shepherd, not you or I to shepherd them but to point them to the good shepherd Jesus so they come to know His voice and be saved.

We are called to follow Jesus and as we follow we are asked by our Lord, whom shall I send into the fields, into the world to do my work? Yes Lord we might eagerly say, send me. We are called to proclaim the good news, not because we are selling the idea to the world but rather because we testify to the change in our life, to the love we know in our hearts and to the truth of forgiveness, life and salvation in our Lord Jesus. This is what we share, who Jesus is in our life, that He has saved us and now we no longer live for ourselves, the world and the devil but rather we live for Jesus by the power of His Spirit in us. Jesus heals people and we get to share in that, the redeeming work of our Lord. We may not have the gift of healing but we can point people to Jesus the great healer. Even if someone is not healed here in this temporal life Jesus carries them and heals them eternally.

So now I ask you? Are there not many people out there who are crying out for healing, for a light to show them the way out of the darkness of sin, for the word of Jesus to set the captives free and share the very word of Jesus that declares forgiveness.

We often think that the people of this world are not crying out for deliverance and we often think that there are so many workers in the field but so few people yearning to hear.

Yet Jesus says it this way. He says to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

And Jesus says this to us today. Notice He doesn't say there are not many, we have too many workers, rather the harvest is plentiful. How about that? The harvest is abundant not there are not many people out there who are ready to hear the good news, rather the harvest is plentiful. Yet the workers are few. Do we ask Jesus about working in His field? The sending can only come by faith, knowing it is God who sends to do His work in the name of Jesus.

The wonderful text we may remember when Jesus calls the disciples to cast their fishing net to the other side after a long night of toil reminds us that it is Jesus who provides the fish for us who are learning and growing in Jesus to be fishers of people. In Matthew 4 we read, “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.”

Notice it is Jesus who provides the fish. He prepares the hearts of those who hear the word from you and I. We don't have to find someone in our own strength to be workers in the field. Rather we go

out sent in faith and walk in the good deeds that God has prepared for us beforehand. How amazing is that?

So we go, sent by God and filled by His spirit in the name of Jesus for the harvest is plentiful and the workers are few. Let us continue to pray for each other in this congregation and in the world that by faith people say Here I am lord send me. As we are sent we take the life giving word and work in us to those around us in the harvest that is plentiful.

Ask the Lord of the harvest.

Amen