

# 17 June 2020

## Introduction

Moses tells the Israelites that they are called to be a priestly kingdom and a holy people. Jesus sends out the disciples as laborers into the harvest. In baptism we too are anointed for ministry, sharing God's compassion with our needy world. From the Lord's table we go forth to proclaim the good news, to heal the sick, and to share our bread with the hungry.

## Prayer of the Day

God of compassion, you have opened the way for us and brought us to yourself. Pour your love into our hearts, that, overflowing with joy, we may freely share the blessings of your realm and faithfully proclaim the good news of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.**

## Romans 5:1-8

*We are no longer God's enemies but have peace with God because we were brought into a right relationship with God through Christ's death.*

<sup>1</sup>Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup>through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. <sup>3</sup>And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, <sup>4</sup>and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, <sup>5</sup>and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

<sup>6</sup>For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup>Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. <sup>8</sup>But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.

## Matthew 9:35--10:14

*The mission of Jesus' followers is to continue the mission of Jesus himself. Here, he instructs his first disciples as to how they might proclaim the gospel through their words and deeds.*

<sup>35</sup>Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. <sup>36</sup>When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. <sup>37</sup>Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; <sup>38</sup>therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

<sup>10:1</sup>Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. <sup>2</sup>These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother

Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; <sup>3</sup>Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; <sup>4</sup>Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.

<sup>5</sup>These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, <sup>6</sup>but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. <sup>7</sup>As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.'<sup>8</sup>Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment. <sup>9</sup>Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, <sup>10</sup>no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for laborers deserve their food. <sup>11</sup>Whatever town or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave. <sup>12</sup>As you enter the house, greet it. <sup>13</sup>If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. <sup>14</sup>If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town.

## Sermon

Lectionary 11 A – Romans 5:1-8, Matthew 9:35 – 10:14

### Gift?

*Is the gift of salvation,  
the proclamation of the imminence of the reign of God, and  
the authority to "cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, and cast out demons"  
a blessing or a curse?*

We've all received gifts we didn't want,  
or know what to do with.

A mysterious gadget without a diagram or instructions,  
where we're left to figure out whether it is for the kitchen, the bathroom, or the  
workbench?

A painting or sculpture  
that didn't suit our taste.

Socks and pajamas  
on Christmas morning,  
when we were children.

I wonder if the disciples wanted the gifts Jesus gave them.

While the story of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost,  
related to us by Luke,  
gets all the attention,  
Matthew, Mark and Luke all tell us about a time,  
early in Jesus' public ministry,  
when the twelve disciples

were equipped with authority,  
power.

Here Matthew tells us that Jesus gave them the ability  
and the responsibility  
to “cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, and cast out demons.”

So they go,  
in pairs.

But what do you suppose they were thinking, as they went?  
What did they say to one another along the way?

Had they been asking Jesus to give them a chance to show them what they had  
learned? Were they eager to earn his approval?

Were they ready and confident to go to other towns in Galilee?  
Or were they nervous?

Were they worried about failing?  
Or sure that they loved and supported, no matter what?

It's hard to know.

We don't get much of a report about what they said and did.

But later,  
in the Gospel of Luke,  
we're told that Jesus sent out seventy disciples,  
apparently to Jewish, Samaritan and Gentiles communities.

And when they got back they had stories to tell:

Demons forced into submission.

Satan falling from heaven.

Immunity from the bites of poisonous snakes and scorpions.

But in the midst of their enthusiasm for the things they had done,  
Jesus offers a sobering word about God's steadfast love for them.

I wonder, too,  
what you and I might have done,  
if we were among those whom Jesus sends.

Would we have travelled just far enough away not to be noticed by the others,  
just to relax for a few days?

Would we have gone to a village or two,  
but spend most of our time talking or reading;  
never really getting around to do the things Jesus asked of us?

Perhaps we would have started out eagerly enough,  
but then become discouraged by some of our first few encounters?

Or is it possible we would have dared to meet people in real need,  
but then held back as we prayed or cared for them,  
not quite sure that God was with us?

Would we have trusted the authority and power Jesus had vested in us,  
but then let such success go to our heads?

Or would we have had mixed results –  
welcome and rejection,  
success and failure?

Based on the stories that follow in Matthew,  
and in the other three Gospels,  
I'm not sure the disciples were ready for the gifts Jesus had given them,  
and the responsibility they entailed.

Anymore than I was ready for what was conferred upon me at my ordination 35 years ago.

Here's an excerpt of that rite.

Imagine Bishop William Huras presiding.

*According to apostolic usage you are now to be set apart to the office of Word and Sacrament in the one holy catholic Church by the laying on of hands and by prayer.*

*Our Lord Jesus Christ says: "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me so I send you. Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any they are retained."*

*And again: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the*

*Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."*

*St. Paul's writes: I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same was also he took the cup, after supper, saying "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.*

*So...*

*Before almighty God, to whom you must give account, and in the presence of this congregation, I ask: Will you assume this office, believing that the Church's call is God's call to the ministry of Word and Sacrament?*

*I then a bit later...*

*Will you be diligent in your study of Scripture and in your use of the means of grace? Will you pray for God's people, nourish them with the Word and Holy Sacraments, and lead them by your own example in faithful service and holy living?*

On June 21, 1985, at St Peter's Lutheran Church in Kitchener  
I naively replied to these and other questions with:

*I will, and I ask God to help me.*

Understanding as little as the disciples of old.

Eager to please Jesus,  
but not sure his authority and power  
could ever be communicated through my voice or hands.

Which brings me to a blessing which accompanies Evangelical Lutheran Worship

## **Blessing and Sending for Mission**

*This order is intended for use when people are being sent forth from the assembly as a tangible expression of the baptismal call to share in Christ's mission to all the world.*

Friends in Christ: Today we give thanks to God and seek God's blessing as we send \_\_\_\_\_ to *description of destination and purpose.*

Let us pray.

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe.  
You made the whole earth for your glory; all creation praises you.  
We lift our voices to join the songs of heaven and earth

in thanksgiving for the many blessings you have given us.  
Renew in us the commitment  
to use our gifts in the service of others, and especially of those in need.  
Let us be your hands to feed the hungry, shelter the homeless,  
clothe the naked, comfort the weary and outcast,  
welcome the stranger, care for creation,  
and be loving neighbours to all people.

Bless those who go out from here to labour in/at \_\_\_\_\_.  
Prosper the work of their hands.  
Bless those who receive [them and] the fruits of their labour,  
and may those who are sent receive blessing in return.  
May the gifts they use and share be signs of your love to all people.

Which is all to say that for 2000 years wavering disciples have served  
as Jesus has equipped them,  
passing the torch from one generation and place to another.

Each of us humbled  
and perhaps overwhelmed by what Jesus asks of us,  
but assured that he accompanies us  
as we bear witness to God's creative and saving power.

Amen.

## Prayers of Intercession

Called into unity with one another and the whole creation, let us pray for our shared world.

*A brief silence.*

Holy One, you bring us together and call us your own. Bless theologians, teachers, and preachers who help us grow in faith. Guide your church, including Trinity Latvian, that we might be a holy people. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Holy One, the whole earth is yours. Where there is fire, bring cool air and new growth. Where there is flooding, bring abatement. Where there is drought, bring rain. Inspire us to care for what you have provided. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Holy One, we have created divisions you will not own. In places of conflict, raise up leaders who work to develop lasting peace and reconciliation. Encourage organizations and individuals who care for all forced to leave their homes. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Holy One, you care for those who are harassed and helpless. Protect and defend those who are abused. Heal those who are sick. Feed all who hunger. Empower all whose voices go unheard, and help us respond to the pressing needs of our neighbors. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Holy One, you provide a plentiful harvest of gifts and resources. Prepare us to labor and gather the fruits of this congregation, that we might discover new ways of living. Minister to us in our work, that we do not lose heart. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

Holy One, you bring all people to yourself. We give thanks for the holy people who have gone before us (*especially*). Sustain us in your mission until the day you bear us up to join the saints in light. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Receive these prayers, O God, and those too deep for words; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

## **Blessing**

Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers,  
nor things present, nor things to come,  
nor powers, nor height, nor depth,  
nor anything else in all creation,  
will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.  
God, the creator, ✚ Jesus, the Christ,  
and the Holy Spirit, the comforter,  
bless you and keep you in eternal love.

**Amen.**

## **Dismissal**

Go in peace. Christ is with you.

**Thanks be to God.**

Ballots – hand deliver by Tuesday!