

The Seventh Sunday of Pentecost

July 3, 2016

**Prayer of the Day:** God of all power and might, you are the giver of all that is good. Help us love you with all our heart, strengthen us in the true faith, provide us with all we need, and keep us safe in your care; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Verse of the Day:** Alleluia! Happy are they who hear the Word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bring forth fruit with patience. Alleluia! (Luke 8:15)

**Sermon Text:** Luke 10:1-12, 16-20

Are you that kind of disciple? You know, one of those standing in front of Jesus and listening to him say: *“Take no moneybag, no purse, no extra pair of sandals; no stopping on the way. Just go—go share the Word. Go to people’s homes and say: ‘Peace to this house!’ And if they say ‘Yes,’ then stay with them. Eat their food; drink their drinks; sleep in their house. Spend time preparing the community for my arrival. If they say ‘No,’ then leave. Shake the dust off your feet in front of everyone, demonstrating how this community wants absolutely nothing to do with God.”*

Are you that kind of disciple? Someone eager to go out, meet people, open your mouth, and speak? Someone willing to hear both joy and rejection? Someone who boldly speaks even though you might meet some resistance?

**Luke 10:1-12, 16-20**

<sup>1</sup> 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. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. <sup>4</sup> Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.

<sup>5</sup> “When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ <sup>6</sup> If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you. <sup>7</sup> Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.

<sup>8</sup> “When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. <sup>9</sup> Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God is near you.’ <sup>10</sup> But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, <sup>11</sup> ‘Even the dust of your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God is near.’ <sup>12</sup> I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town...

<sup>16</sup> “He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me.”

<sup>17</sup> The seventy-two returned with joy and said, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.”

<sup>18</sup> He replied, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. <sup>19</sup> I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. <sup>20</sup> However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

Maybe it feels like the disciples to whom Jesus speaks really does not describe you right now. That you live too far from people. That your workplace is not really the best place to talk about Jesus. That the people in your life and your age means these words do not apply to you. Is Jesus speaking to you?

I assume that you are eager to share the forgiveness Jesus has won. After all, that is what our congregation exists to do, right? To share God's Word of love. It is here that God in his Word and sacraments touches you with his love. It is here that you travel to the cross and see your sins remain forgiven. It is here that Jesus repeats his promise to remain in your life always ([Matthew 28:20](#)).

This wonderful message is not for your ears only. Moved by God's love, you carried the Word into Harrison, Mount Pleasant, and Beaverton. Then you helped plant congregations there. Yet, you did not neglect your own congregation. God's love compels you to give offerings to make sure this house of worship stands out and stands open for people all over the area to meet your God.

Even a portion of your offerings go to your Wisconsin Synod— our national church body. They combine your offerings with other like-minded congregations and send missionaries to Africa, Tibet, China, Indonesia, Russia— places all over the world, places where you may never do mission work, let alone have the opportunity to go and visit. This is what you want to do; you want to share the good news of God's forgiveness with everyone.

Yet, Jesus invites you to participate even more. Jesus is speaking to you today. Nowhere is he saying that you need to pack up your house, move your family to another continent, and shout out the love of Jesus. He does not command you to study the Greek New Testament and Hebrew Old Testament, learn how to preach, how to counsel, and how to plan worship so that you can be professionally trained to share your faith. Nowhere does he tell you that. In fact, these seventy-two disciples do not appear to have any more training than what you already have.

You see, these disciples know exactly who Jesus is. They know he is the Son of God, sent into their world to die for their sins. So, Jesus tells them: "Go! Share that message!" So, do you go?

It is not always easy to do, is it? While that message of forgiveness is exciting and joyful to speak, it is frightening to share. I would venture to say that this fear goes deeper than simply not knowing what to say. The fear to speak probably goes further than meeting a complete stranger. Perhaps the most frightening thing about sharing your faith is all about expectations, right?

Jesus said: **"Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves."** You are as innocent as sheep. You share honest words and sincerely seek the best for others. That does not stop hurtful attacks. People may heartlessly insult your beliefs. Friends and family might call you "stupid," "old-fashioned," "out-of-touch-with-society," or "narrow-minded." People may challenge your trust in a God no one sees (physically with their eyes) and a God who has seemingly lost control of this world. Before you ever open your mouth, you may expect to only hear rejection!

Maybe you expect something else— something the disciples expected. They speak; diseases are healed. They proclaim; demons flee. They preach; people gather. How exciting!

They bask in the praise people heap on them and all the while forget that Jesus sent them to proclaim peace!

The temptation is there to be fixated on what the world determines “successful.” We live in America— a nation blessed with many successes. Businesses strive to sell more products, grow a larger client base, expand, make more money! That is a good thing! Yet, God does not govern his Church by business principles. Nowhere does Jesus tell these seventy-two to go out and meet a quota of converts. Jesus simply sends them out with the Word— even mentioning that they might be welcomed or sent away.

The devil knows that if he can get us caught up in our own expectations, then we might never open our mouths in the first place. He can always point out that our words might be rejected and our personal ego hurt. He might tempt you and me to think that we are succeeding as a congregation only if we grow in numbers. If we do not grow, then we are failing. He knows that if he can lead us to consider our personal expectations more important than what Jesus invites us to do as Christians, then no one will hear the forgiveness Jesus has won for them!

And yes, it is incredibly easy to recall the many times we could have spoken and we did not. And yes, that guilt can be absolutely crushing. Yet, remember the One who removes that guilt.

Your Savior enters this world with the same message you already know. He shares it even though he knows exactly what to expect. The Lamb of God shares a message of forgiveness with the ferocious religious leaders. Those wolves hate him so much that they not only slam a door in his face, but they kill him. He shares the free gift of eternal life, but people reject it, claiming that life’s many activities are more important than getting right with God. Out in the desert, a powerful enemy tries to deter him from the cross. The devil tells Jesus that you and I are not worth more than all the kingdoms of the world. All the riches and power in this world would belong to Jesus if only he stopped thinking about you!

Jesus puts aside rejection and worldly success for you. He is rejected by men, stricken, smitten, and afflicted ([Isaiah 53:3-5](#)). He sheds his blood so that it can be the ink in which your name is written in heaven’s book. He proclaims his forgiveness so that you have peace right now in life. Because of Jesus **your names are written in heaven.**

That, my friends, is the number-one reason to share your faith. You speak, not out of guilt; you speak because of what Jesus did for you. God sent someone— a parent, a family member, a friend, a pastor, a teacher— someone who shared God’s love with you. In the Bible, God reveals your name inscribed in heaven. God loved you this deeply, this freely that he did everything to make you his. This love in your life is the love you get to share!

So, **ARE YOU READY TO ENTER THE HARVEST FIELD?** Jesus is in Samaria, a land that is about 1,600 square miles! That is about the size of the city of Detroit! He sends the seventy-two out— not to foreign nations, not to complete strangers, but to people who have many things in common with them! Men, women, children. Old people, young people; husbands and wives, mothers and fathers, aunts and uncles. Employers and employees; laborers and thinkers. **The harvest is plentiful...** and Jesus gives them the privilege to harvest for him.

Look at your mission field. No, not necessarily foreign nations, complete strangers, but to people who have many things in common with you! Look at Clare County; look at the people living in Clare/Harrison. See the people God has put into your life.

God has given you friendships. Do your friends absolutely know the peace that is theirs because Jesus has died for their sins? Do they know that when they die, faith in Jesus as Savior gets them into heaven? If not, your friendship may allow you to share the Savior because they trust you. They will not grow suspicious that you want something from them. They will not wonder if a stranger knocking on their door has ulterior motives. You, being their friend, allows them to know that they can ask you any question they have about Jesus.

God may have blessed you with children. You have planted the Word in their hearts when you brought them to Sunday School and Confirmation classes. They may not come here anymore, but they still remember that they spent time here. Remind them how important it is to continue hearing God's Word. To not drift away from it, to forget it, or to consider it unimportant. Invite them to prepare their hearts for eternity now while there is still time.

As you go out, "live your faith." In other words, speak of God's active role in your health, finances, and skills. Publicly thank God for the food you have; express trust in God when troubles arise. You do these things at home and at church; take them with you to the grocery store, restaurants, and bank lines.

If you are on Facebook, share posts from our St. John facebook page. Your friends will see that post; they can read it. They can ask you about questions they have. This opens doors to sharing your Savior.

As if the harvest around you is not already great enough, Jesus urges you to **Ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers.** In your bulletin is a half sheet. Here is something that does not require traveling to obscure areas, knocking on doors, or a large group of friends. On this sheet is a diagram. Identify people from your circle of friends, family, relatives, neighbors—people in your life. You can fill in some blanks or all of them. Put the sheet on your refrigerator or on your end table— somewhere you will see it often. Then pray. Do the very thing Jesus urges you to do. Pray that someone might the good news with them; pray that you might be the one to share the good news. Ask God to give you the opportunity to speak. Ask God to give you the words to say. Ask God to give you the confidence and courage to speak with them. Find that one time when you can invite them to a church event, to a worship service, or to a Bible class. Introduce them to your pastor or a fellow member. Continue praying— after all, God is serious about hearing your prayer and answering it.

Yes, sometimes it will be frightening to share your faith. You might be called names, feel hurt, or abused. Sometimes you will feel frustrated because it seems that your words are falling on deaf ears. Jesus knows how you feel. That is why he says: **"He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me... I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."**

He points you back to the reason to never give up. Your name is written in heaven—and it is written there because you have heard the Word of peace. God has provided you with that same Word of peace to share with others. He tells you that his ears remain open to your every cry for help. He has made you a disciple, one **READY TO ENTER THE HARVEST FIELD!**