

July 3, 2022  
Fourth Sunday after Pentecost  
St. Timothy Lutheran Church – Huber Heights, OH  
Pastor Joel Sutton

Luke 10:1-20 (Galatians 6:1-10, 14-18)

AS CHRIST’S DISCIPLE, REJOICE THAT YOUR NAME IS WRITTEN IN HEAVEN.

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

Our text for meditation today comes from the Gospel according to St Luke, the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter, which you heard read earlier.

In last week’s sermon I said that by virtue of your Baptism you are a disciple of Jesus. You did not choose Jesus, but He chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, not only fruits of good deeds but fruits of love and witness to those who do not know Jesus. (cf: John 15:1-2, 16) In the washing of the water and the Word, God united you to Christ’s death and resurrection, adopting you as His own child, commissioning you as a disciple and apprentice of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The cost of discipleship is expensive in the eyes of the world. It is a radical commitment that supersedes all material and family ties. Our Lord commands that you, His present-day disciple, do not look back to embrace the treasures of the world or the love of your family. He says:

***“... If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. <sup>24</sup> For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.”*** (Luke 9:23–24)

Jesus never promised His disciples that life on this side of heaven would be a pleasant walk through a rose garden. No. He said:

***“In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”*** (John 16:33)

Jesus has not only overcome the world, He alone has overcome and won victory over sin, death, and the power of the devil. He has given His Church a mission which flows from Himself as She faithfully gathers around Word and Sacrament. The mission requires dedication by all to proclaim the words, works, death, and Resurrection of Christ Jesus, making disciples by means of baptizing and teaching all that He has commanded.

In our Gospel text this morning Jesus says:

***“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”*** (Luke 10:2)

At this point of Jesus earthly ministry, He alone had been working at bringing in the harvest. He sent His twelve disciples out for a short time. (cf: Luke 9:1-2) But He now expands His Gospel

outreach by sending 72 more workers out into the harvest field. The harvest field imagery calls to mind the parable of the sower. (Luke 8:4–8) The Word of the Gospel is the seed, and our Lord has called that it be sown and preached to all nations. (cf: Matthew 28:19) The Word has the power to create the fruits of faith and salvation. (cf: Romans 1:16, 10:17)

Jesus *is not* calling *all* mankind into the harvest fields to labor as *full-time* pastors and teachers and missionaries. Some disciples are given to preach and teach, but others are given support those who have been sent into the harvest fields, supporting them prayerfully and financially, praying that the Lord of the harvest would send workers into the harvest fields. He calls all of His disciples, pastors and laymen, to proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light, regardless whether you are a butcher, a baker, or a candlestick maker. (cf: 1 Peter 2:9)

Christ's Church is more than its pastors. Some folks think that the pastor is the paid professional Christian who does *all* the evangelism and outreach while they go about their daily activities. And while it is true that I am compensated by your tithes and offerings, the same Jesus who lives and works in me lives and works in you. There is no difference. My ordination into the Office of the Holy Ministry does not give me a special dose of Jesus. The same Christ in me is the same Christ in you. It is the same Holy Spirit. The same Baptism. It is just that God works through each of us in diverse ways, in our different stations in life. I represent Christ to the Church by virtue of God's call into the pastoral office, but we all represent Christ to the world by virtue of Baptism as Jesus' disciples.

As His disciple, you are called into the harvest field of your family and friends and coworkers to proclaim the joy of your salvation, Christ crucified who has saved you from your sins, from death, and from eternal damnation. Your words do not have to be eloquent or perfect. God the Father is the Lord of the harvest. You and I, disciples of Jesus, merely sow the seed, sharing the Gospel Word of Christ. God alone gives the growth. (cf: 1 Corinthians 3:6–9) It is an old cliché, but when you share the Gospel, you are one beggar telling another beggar where he can find a piece of bread. And that Bread is the Bread of Life. (cf: John 6:22–51)

Some will hear the Gospel and by the power of the Holy Spirit come to life-saving faith. Others will hear and refuse the forgiveness, life, and salvation, that Christ has won on their behalf. You and I have no way of knowing who will believe and who will refuse. So, each of us must continue to sow the Gospel seed by telling the Good News of Him who came into the world to save sinners, of whom you and I are the foremost. (cf: 1 Timothy 1:15)

As brothers and sisters in Christ, are to bear one another's burdens, serving one another as Christ has served and continues to serve you. (cf: Galatians 6:2) Continue to uphold and encourage each other in the true faith. The Church is a fellowship of beggars, receiving and offering love, support, and hope to one another, each acknowledging our dependence upon God and our interdependence on one another. We are always in the bread line, if not receiving, then giving. In our Epistle text, St Paul writes:

***"! Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. (Galatians 6:1)***

Before you try to diagnose and extract the speck out of your brother's eye, examine yourself. Take the log out of your own eye. Repent of your own sins. And then and only then, speak the

truth in love, gently and humbly restoring your neighbor. (cf: Luke 6:41–42) But beware! Paul says:

***“Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. <sup>2</sup> Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”*** (Galatians 6:1–2)

The Church is full of sinners. That is why we gather together. The sinful flesh is constantly tempting you and me to look down upon, and to despise, fellow Christians who are struggling – sometimes causing them to leave the church. There are others who imagine they have been hurt by members, and leave. Some leave because God’s Word is used to reprove and rebuke – just as Scripture requires. The devil is in the details. He lays a host of traps in effort to make Christians fight amongst themselves rather than focusing on the mission of sowing the Gospel Word. Repent of your sins – be reconciled to your brother – and then pray that the Lord would bring others to repentance and preserve them in the true faith.

God never promised His disciples that life on this side of heaven would be a pleasant walk through a rose garden. He sends the 72 out – two-by-two, as sheep among wolves. They are to take nothing with them, but be persistent and vigilant. When they arrive at a house, they are to greet it with peace. If they are welcomed, they are to stay and eat what’s provided. In that town they are to heal the sick and proclaim Jesus’ words, saying:

***“The kingdom of God has come near to you.”*** (Luke 10:9)

If the town does not welcome them, they’re to:

***“... go into its streets and say, ‘Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near.’”*** (Luke 10:11)

Is Jesus’ method of proclamation too plain and boring? Are the words too dull? Is sending pairs of disciples with no supplies repeating the simple words of Jesus too backward? Can these words do anything? Of course, they can – and they do. They are not just any words. They are the Word of the Lord.

Everything has consequences and the consequence for receiving the Word of God and trusting in Christ is life and salvation. The consequence of rejecting the Word of the Lord is punishment and eternal death. The city of Sodom was evil. But for those who reject Jesus’ message of salvation, it will be worse for them on the Last Day than the destruction of Sodom. (cf: Luke 10:12) The cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida had witnessed Jesus’ mighty works but the people rejected Him. Even Capernaum, the headquarters of Jesus’ earthly ministry will be brought down to hell because of their rejection of Jesus and His Gospel – the very same Gospel that brings pagans to repent and believe.

By the power of God’s Word, people are healed and demons flee. It is the work that only God can do, and He does it through His external Word. His Word is powerful and the message is dire. Regularly hearing His Word and receiving His Sacraments are the most important thing you can do in this life. By these means the Holy Spirit prepares and equips you for your mission as you battle against wolves who preach the false gospels of the world. It prepares you to do your part in service of Christ’s Church, making sacrifices for your neighbor and sharing the redeeming love of Jesus.

The power of God's Word has nothing to do with the dazzling eloquence of the speaker. In the Old Testament God spoke to Balaam through a donkey. (cf: Numbers 22:22–31) The seventy-two didn't go out dressed in hipster clothes with light shows and upbeat music. No. In our text, God spoke through humble men walking town to town, appearing as homeless, repeating the exact message of Christ Jesus.

Today God continues to speak through humble servants such as the dull, inarticulate man standing before you this morning. It has nothing to do with the man delivering the message. Jesus says:

***“The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me.”*** (Luke 10:16)

As long as your pastor is preaching the Gospel in its purity and administering the Sacraments according to our Lord's institution, it is God's Word and His work. He pours out His blessings, purchased on your behalf on the cross: namely, forgiveness, life, and salvation. The devil has no hold on you. You have freedom in Christ. As Arthur Just says in his commentary on Luke's Gospel:

***“Jesus will continually watch Satan fall like lightning from heaven as his ministry continues in the preaching and sacraments of the church. As Jesus did in his exorcisms, the church will free people from Satan's bondage and transfer them into God's kingdom.”*** (Just, Luke 9:51–24:53, Concordia Commentary, 439)

To be sure, the devil will not give up. He'll try to overwhelm you with grief and fear through pain, sickness, and even death, but you have nothing to fear. The battle may go on, but Jesus has won the war and He gives you His peace. The peace of knowing you have been reconciled with God for the sake of Jesus' death and resurrection.

God never promised His disciples that life on this side of heaven would be a pleasant walk through a rose garden, but He did promise to never leave you nor forsake you. (cf: Deuteronomy 31:6-8) So, instead of getting caught up in the worldly worries and troubles of the day, immerse yourself in God's Word so that you trust in all His promises. Pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest while proclaiming the hope of salvation within you. For as His baptized disciple, the kingdom of God has come to you. He has:

***“...redeemed you; [He has] called you by name, you are [His].”*** (Isaiah 43:1)

Rejoice for your name is written in our Lord's book in heaven. (Luke 10:20; Revelation 20:15)

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understand, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,  
Amen.