

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost – July 7, 2019
Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church

Pastor Charles Heup

Luke 10:1-3, 16-20 (NIV)

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. 2) 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. 3) **Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.** ... 16) "Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me; but whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me." 17) The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." 18) He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19) I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. 20) However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, members of God's family;

When people think of a family run business, images of a local pizza place like Dino's Pizza and Sub Shop or Chester's Drive-In here in Plymouth might come to mind. But family owned businesses run the gamut from small local operations to mid-sized corporations like Wisconsin based Kwik Trip (which has annual sales of 3 billion dollars)¹ to those with huge global interests like Walmart (the world's largest company by revenue with over \$500 billion dollars in sales and over 2.2 million employees. As of April 30, 2019, Walmart has 11,368 stores and clubs in 27 countries, operating under 55 different names.)²

I'm guessing that you've never thought of the Christian Church as a "family business."

But Jesus talked about being about his Father's business even as a young child (cf. Luke 2:49.) Jesus' role in the Father's business was to provide salvation for the world.

The Apostle Paul reminds believers: "in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith." (Galatians 3:26 NIV) Through faith in Jesus we have a role in the Father's family business too. Our text for today will help us to better understand our role in the Father's Family Business. But to put it simply, our role is bringing the salvation Christ provided for the world to the world.

Theme: You have a place in the Father's Family "Business"

1. Begin your tasks with prayer
2. Go about your tasks with confidence in the Lord's blessing
3. Rejoice that your names are written in heaven

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. 2) 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.

Jesus appointed or set apart 72 workers in addition to the 12 whom he had called to follow him and to work with him. He sent these individuals out in groups of 2 so they could support and encourage one another as they visited the towns and places that Jesus himself would visit. We might think of these individuals as being Jesus' support network as they helped to prepare the people for the arrival of Jesus. We might think of our modern day staff ministers or evangelists. We could make this application to our own role in the Father's

¹ https://lacrossetribune.com/news/kwik-trip-is-still-family-owned-and-still-growing/article_4a4bc4d0-4102-5cfe-b61a-53f840e32878.html

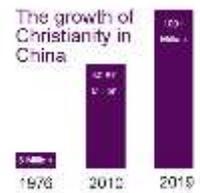
² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walmart>

business: members of the church seeking out friends, neighbors and relatives who need to hear the Gospel – sharing the gospel with them and then introducing them to the pastor for additional instruction in a Bible Information class.

The task that Jesus gave the 72 was a large one. There was a sense of urgency in Jesus' words as he sent out these workers. Jesus spoke of a large harvest - a harvest of souls. He also spoke of a shortage of workers. He told them to pray – asking the Lord of the Harvest to send out workers.

The mission fields are still ripe today both at home and abroad. There is something for each of us to do as workers in our Father's Business. But how will we begin? We will begin with prayer asking the Lord to send and bless workers into the harvest fields that are before us today. Here are a few fields to include in your prayers:

- The Vietnamese government has invited WELS to build a theological training facility in its capital city of Hanoi, an unprecedented opportunity for our synod. WELS is currently the only Protestant church with official government permission to work with the more than two million Hmong living in Vietnam and surrounding countries. Hmong Christians in Vietnam are grateful for the message of free grace from Jesus that WELS has been sharing with them since 2012. One Hmong pastor in Vietnam, Wasa Lau, says, "Many members would come and ask me to share the Word of God with them, but I didn't know how to do it. Since receiving training [from WELS], I have grown in my confidence in what I believe and in sharing God's Word. . . . The Hmong Fellowship Church currently has more than 300 congregations, but we still lack many things—especially training for all of the leaders of these congregations. That is what we are looking for now—for generation after generation to grow in the proper understanding of Scripture. That is what WELS can do for us."
- The Country of China is another example of a field ripe for harvest. It's an unlikely place for a harvest due to government persecution and oppression. But the Spirit is reaching large numbers of souls with the Gospel. (see slide) Here's how the Christians in China describe their role in the Father's Business: *"[Because of government restrictions], we can no longer meet in larger groups," one Christian friend told us. "So we meet in small groups - - where it's easier to invite friends to come. The church is growing in my city."*



Pray for the gospel to bring all 1.4 billion souls in China under its influence.

The WELS Connection for today will feature another mission opportunity that the Lord has placed before us as members of God's family and workers in the Father's Business. It will also remind us not to forget the opportunities that exist in our own backyards!

Prayer is not our only task in the Father's business – it's how we start our tasks. Jesus teaches us: Go about your tasks with confidence in the Lord's blessing

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. 2) 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. 3) Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. ...

The Father's Business is a risky business – more dangerous in some parts of the world than others. Jesus indicated that our work will be dangerous and challenging by saying **I am sending you out like Lambs among wolves**. Don't forget who it is that is sending us this risky mission! The Lord (our Good Shepherd) is

sending us out with his protection! He is the one who has already defeated the evil that opposes the spreading of the message of the Salvation he has won. Listen to the words of your Good Shepherd and take heart in the promise he makes regarding his sheep. **My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. (28) I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand.** (John 10:27-28 NIV)

As we heard in the Gospel lesson for today, Jesus spoke at length about the work he had in mind for the 72 and how they should go about the business of carrying out that work. His words assured them of his blessings on their efforts. They were to have a single minded focus as they relied on the Lord to provide for their needs by opening the hearts of those they taught to host them in their homes. (cf. vss. 4-8) They were to announce the coming of the Kingdom of God as they used the Lord's power to heal the sick. (cf. vs. 9) To those who refused to welcome them, they were to share the Lord's message of judgement (cf. vss. 10-15). Always, they were to be mindful that they were representing Jesus and his heavenly Father so that they do not take rejection personally.

The Lord promises his blessings and protection to us as well. Those promises give us the confidence to let our joy in Christ be evident to all and to always be willing and **prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.** (1 Peter 3:15 NIV) Those promises give us the confidence to offer our support to others as they take the Gospel to places where we are unable to go.

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The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." The Lord's blessings had been evident in their travels – even the demons submitted to the authority they had been given by Christ. Such is the power of the Gospel – it drives Satan from the hearts of unbelievers and fills them with peace – freeing their consciences from the guilt of sin – and setting them free from their slavery to sin, death and the devil.

[Jesus] replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19) I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.

The power they had over the devils and demons didn't surprise Jesus. He saw the fall of Satan. Already at the beginning of time, Jesus as true God had seen Satan being cast from heaven following his rebellion. He himself had previously sent the Devil "packing" by resisting his temptations in the wilderness. During his ministry he frequently cast out demons. The 72 had been sent out in his name to call people from the power of Satan to the power of God. (cf. Acts 26:18) In Christ the Devil met his match and he would be overcome -- Jesus speaks of the fall of Satan – to remind us that his final judgement awaits him in the torments of hell.

Frequently the Scriptures speak of the Devil as a snake or a serpent. He is always associated with evil. That helps us to understand Jesus' next comments. As he had promised his protection, power and blessing went with them on their journeys. The demons submitted to them because he had given them the authority to trample on them and to overcome them – safe under his protecting arms nothing will harm them as they carry out their tasks in the Father's business.

In this context it is best to take Jesus words about trampling on snakes and scorpions in close connection with the power he had given them to overcome the enemy. Satan cannot inflict his pain at will – all is limited by Christ – and even the suffering that Christ allows us to endure as his disciples serves our eternal good and ends in eternal blessing. Romans chapter 8 speaks of the love of Christ and what it means for those who work in the Father's Business.

Christ Jesus who died--more than that, who was raised to life--is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. (35) Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? (36) As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." (37) No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. (38) For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, (39) neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:34-39 NIV)

Jesus has promised that the gates of hell will not prevail against his church. (cf. Matthew 16:18) This is an eternal blessing – one which fills us with hope and joy.

It was truly amazing that the evil spirits submitted to the 72 whom Jesus had sent on ahead of him. But there was something even more amazing that Jesus wanted them to consider. That's why he said to them **20) ... do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."**

Jesus points the 72 to the eternal victory that is theirs because he has defeated Satan. Let them rejoice not at what has happened to others but in the blessing that Christ has won for them. As an interesting sidelight to this verse, Matthew 7:22 speaks of those who were lost even though they had cast out demons. There is the danger that by focusing on what they had done that they would be filled with pride – and the fact remains they did nothing! They were only the tools Christ used to accomplish his work. Let them rejoice in what Christ has done!

As we function in our role in the Father's Business we may find many reasons to rejoice. But our true joy comes not from what we have done but from what has been done for us. We rejoice then not in what we have done but in what has been done for us – we rejoice that our names are written in heaven.

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Amen.