

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost – July 15, 2018
Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church

Pastor Charles Heup

(Mark 6:7-13 NIV)

Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits. 8) These were his instructions: "Take nothing for the journey except a staff--no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. 9) Wear sandals but not an extra tunic. 10) Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. 11) And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave, as a testimony against them." 12) They went out and preached that people should repent. 13) They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.

CALLED TO SERVE

Dear friends in Christ Jesus:

One of the wonderful blessings that we enjoy as members of the Wisconsin Synod is our synod's worker training schools which train our pastors and teachers for our congregations and schools. Those schools include 2 high schools or prep schools (one in Watertown, Wisconsin and the other in Saginaw, Michigan), a college in New Ulm, Minnesota and the Seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin which is where our pastors complete their final education before they are called to serve a congregation.

Back in Jesus time – there were no prep schools, college or seminary to train the disciples to preach the Gospel. There was one-on-one instruction from the Lord Jesus himself – and then there were opportunities like the one reported in our text where Jesus gave his disciples the opportunity to get some hands on experience in preaching to sinners. As we consider this lesson we can learn some things about the way Jesus reaches out to sinners.

Jesus Reaches Sinners through His Messengers.

1. He sends his messengers
2. He instructs them
3. He blesses them

When we think of Jesus sending messengers –we might think of our own pastor or an individual who has been called to serve in a mission field. But these are not the only individuals the Lord sends. In our text Jesus called the Twelve to himself and sent them out two by two. Who were these twelve? How many of them can you recall? They were the men that we know as the 12 apostles: four of them were fishermen: Peter and his brother Andrew, James and his brother John. Then there was Matthew the tax collector. There was Philip and his Friend Nathaniel. Thomas, Simon, another James, Judas, and Jude. As we see these were ordinary men whom the Lord called, trained and sent out.

The Lord still calls ordinary men and women to serve him. Some serve as pastors and missionaries, others as teachers – either full or part-time. Others serve in positions of leadership in Christian congregations and still others as Christian parents and Christian friends. Ultimately, the Lord wants every Christian to serve him as we are reminded in Ephesians 4:11-12.

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12) to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up... (Ephesians 4:11-12)

It is helpful for pastors and congregations to be reminded that the Lord is the one who calls and sends pastors to train God's people for works of service. Knowing that it is the Lord Jesus who has lead me to serve this congregation is an encouragement to me especially when things don't always work out the way I'd like them to or when I wonder if I have the right stuff to be the pastor this congregation needs. Knowing that the Lord has sent me to be your pastor is also an encouragement to you – especially when you become aware of my weaknesses and shortcomings. Finally each of us needs to remember that this is not our church but the Lord's and that he will take care of it in spite of our individual weaknesses. With that in mind we will gladly serve together for his glory.

But since we're not just talking about pastors but others as well whom the Lord has called to serve – it's important for us to realize that the Lord calls individuals through the congregation to serve as leaders and teachers, that the Lord gives parents the responsibility of training children in the fear and the admonition of the Lord and that he has given to each of us the responsibility of being prepared to share the reason for the hope of eternal life that we have with others. There is a comfort and an encouragement in each of these situations which comes from knowing that the Lord has called us to serve him and that he promises to equip us and bless our service according to his own desires.

In our text the Lord called the apostles and sent them out in pairs so that they could support and encourage each other in their efforts but he also made it clear to them that he was the one who would instruct and bless them.

The instructions he gave them in our text were intended to help them realize that their strength for the task would not rest in anything they would do but rather on what he would do for them and through them. **8) These were his instructions: "Take nothing for the journey except a staff--no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. 9) Wear sandals but not an extra tunic. 10) Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. 11) And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave, as a testimony against them."**

Essentially Jesus is telling them to go as they were – taking along only what they had with them at the present time their walking stick but no extras. No extra food, no bag or pouch to carry money or food, no money in their money belt or wallets. One pair of sandals and one tunic or shirt. Not even an extra tunic for warmth. As they would travel, the Lord would provide homes for them to stay in. They should be content with that home – not going from place to place as if they were dissatisfied and looking for better accommodations. Jesus also wanted them to realize that they and their message would not be welcomed by everyone – they were to treat these people as unbelievers and as those who were outside of the kingdom of God by shaking the dust off their shoes as they left their village.

Today the Lord also gives instructions to those who serve him by reaching out to sinners – they are to go boldly with the truth of the Gospel. Those whom the Lord calls and sends as full time workers have a right to expect that those whom they serve will support them and care for their physical needs. The Lord’s instructions come to us in his word and that means that those who serve the Lord will want to make full use of that word to grow in their knowledge and understanding so they are fully equipped to carry out their tasks.

That’s one of the reasons why we support a comprehensive seminary training program for our future called workers. But once again let us remember that all of us have the privilege of serving the Lord by reaching out to sinners. How does the average Christian receive his instructions from the Lord?

Those instructions also are found in the word. The importance of making full use of God’s word can be seen when we realize that those congregations who have the greatest number of members in Adult Bible study also have a larger number of adults joining that congregation by way of adult confirmation. It would appear that those who take the Lord’s instructions to heart and study his word are filled with joy and eagerness to reach out to sinners – and the Lord blesses their efforts.

Soon our fall Bible study programs will begin. These programs are intended to provide opportunities for each of our members. While there is a steady group of participants, the majority of the members of our congregation don’t regularly take advantage of these opportunities. That suggests that changes to our programs and offerings might be appropriate. If the timing is bad or if child-care is an issue or if there is something else that has prevented you from participating in our adult studies – let me know. Let’s work together to find ways to for the majority of our members and families to become more involved in studying the instructions that God give us.

The Lord promises that he will bless us through his word and he also promises that he will bless others as we share his word with them. Our text speaks of some special blessings that Jesus provided his apostles as they went out to share the message of repentance and forgiveness. He gave them authority over demons. He also empowered them to heal those who were sick as our text tells us: **12) They went out and preached that people should repent. 13) They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.**

Those miracles especially the power to drive out the demons – Satan’s agents who were opposing the work of Jesus – were a demonstration of the fact that Jesus’ power and authority rested upon the apostles. Today the Lord does not accompany the preaching of the Gospel with such miracles because the written Gospel is filled with evidence of Christ’s power and authority and proclaims his victory over the devil through his resurrection from the dead. Yet the Gospel is still the power of God for salvation to those who believe. Every time we use the Gospel and someone’s mind is changed about sin and they come to faith in Jesus as their Savior – we too are showing that Jesus has defeated the devil.

These are the victories and the miracles that Jesus allows his pastors and missionaries and all who serve the Lord by reaching out to sinners to accomplish today.

Yes Jesus still reaches out to sinners today by calling and sending us, by instructing us and by blessing our message – what greater task could there be for a Christian than sharing the message of the forgiveness of sins which we know and which assures us of our place in God’s family and the gift of eternal life with others?

Not everyone young man can be a pastor, but some can be. Boys, why not consider it for yourself as a career choice. Adults why not encourage your sons and grandsons to pursue this wonderful profession. The same encouragement can be given concerning the teaching ministry. Girls (and boys, too), why not consider becoming a Christian teacher? Encourage your sons and daughters to pursue this wonderful profession.

Not all of us can be Sunday School or VBS teachers or teach teens and adults the Word in our Christian congregation – but some can, how about you?

But there is one thing that all of us can do – we all can share the word with our children, with friends, with neighbors? Why won’t you? If it’s a matter of not knowing what to say – the Lord Jesus will provide the instruction in his Word. All of us can study that word at home, in our Bible classes and through weekly sermons. Why won’t you? If it’s because we’re too timid, the Lord will strengthen us through his Word. Why won’t you use it? If it’s because we’re afraid of rejection – remember that the one that will be rejected is Jesus. The bottom line is that we can make all kinds of excuses but there is not a single one that will stand up as far as the Lord is concerned because he has called us all to serve him by praising his name and has promised to bless our service to him.

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May we all keep this in mind as we go forth as Jesus’ messengers to share the good news of eternal life with everyone. Amen.