

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Last week in our Gospel lesson we heard that as Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem, he sent messengers out ahead of him. Today we hear that Jesus sent seventy more messengers out ahead of him. And like all of those messengers, we too are sent with a call to discipleship each week...but how do we perceive discipleship and what do we consider when we hear, “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord”? In my former life as a musician, “go in peace” sounded somewhat like last call in some of the night-clubs, biker-bars, and roadhouses I used to work in. At the end of the night, you heard something like, “You don’t have to go home, but you can’t stay here...so drink up and get on your way.” This is the most harmless order to close the bar that I’ll share but there were others that were much more “colorful” directives at two in the morning. So, is our instruction to “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord” just simply a “last-call” demanding us to leave the church?

When we hear “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord” what do we understand this to mean for us? Do we close our faith like we close our hymnal and head out, only to return next Sunday, grab our spot in the church, open our hymnal along with our faith and begin to worship? Do we come here to church with the intent of being uplifted and carrying that spirit away from here and sharing it or does our call to discipleship close down with our last call of, “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord”? Arthur Schopenhauer the philosopher whose key focus was the primacy of the will, once said we love to buy books because we believe we are buying the time to read them. We all know the key to any book is taking that time to sit down and read it. Is our faith like those books that Schopenhauer is referring to...something we associate with in this building...only with the good intention of making ourselves better rather than actually using it “out there” one day?

In our world today though, there seems to be this notion that we can and should be able to obtain knowledge without taking the time to learn or experience. We show up here in the church with good intentions, patients, and open hearts to learn, to discover, and to enjoy all that we figure will make us righteous. But like that time we buy with the intention of reading that book, our faith is not something we can put on a shelf to look at later when we have the time...we cannot truly claim a faith until we engage with it...and engage in it with others. But unfortunately, the faith we seek out is a self-centered theology of glory that seeks a god who will make me a smarter and a more powerful person in order to show others that I know all about the Bible and I’m a good and decent person who wants to save the downtrodden with my notions and understandings...but do it all on my terms and on my time.

Today in our Gospel lesson, Jesus tells us that our faith comes with no provisions...our faith does not assure us power, glory, or righteousness, our faith merely assures us vulnerability and a promise of salvation. As people of faith, we are the vulnerable sheep among the wolves. God has gathered this mass of busted human beings into this assembly we call the church and it’s in this assembly we find God at its center in Word and in Sacrament. Bonhoeffer said this about this gathering:

The Church does not need brilliant personalities but faithful servants of Jesus and the brethren. Not in the former but in the latter is the lack. The Church will place its confidence only in the simple servant of the Word of Jesus Christ because it knows that then it will be

guided, not according to human wisdom and human conceit, but by the Word of the Good Shepherd.¹

We as sheep are called, and we are blessed to be faithful followers of that Word, but in that call of discipleship it is assumed as a call to be powerful, almighty saviors, rather than disciples who are sent vulnerably and *in need of hospitality*. St. Paul very eloquently reminds us in his letter to Rome that we have been blessed in the grace to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ; I liken this blessing and this call that is before us this morning in our Gospel to the Acts of the apostles when the disciples were locked up and then flogged by jealous Sadducees for healing and teaching in the name of Jesus. We hear in Acts:

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It doesn't say that when you enter a town or a house that right away the town goes condo and all the houses become mansions and all prosper...but we tend to think this when we hear the Kingdom of God has come near or we associate the Kingdom of God with prosperity. Do we really understand what the Kingdom of God coming near truly means? The Kingdom of God coming near does not mean power and prosperity for disciples, rather it is the deeds of Jesus Christ, it is service, it is vulnerability or as I said last week...it is following without reservation or hesitation and with it comes the suffering that accompanies discipleship. Once again, as I did last week, I quote Dietrich Bonhoeffer on discipleship and what he has said about following Jesus:

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Paul goes on to remind us:

May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. (Gal 6:14)

May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ reflects what Paul writes earlier in this same Epistle about the believer's unity with Christ:

¹⁹ For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; ²⁰ and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Gal 2:19-20)

Paul's compulsion to gently restore the sinner is not based simply on his own hope for mercy someday, but on the more profound point that it is no longer he who lives, but Christ in him, and it is the character of Christ to forgive the sinner. Today may we be reminded that all die to our sins, but all our sins and transgressions are NOT met with a punishment of wrath or vengeance, but they are met with the spirit of gentleness, and the life we now live in the flesh we live by faith in the Son of God, who loved us all and gave himself for us.

And today, that same Spirit of Gentleness joins little Oliver Ryan Hartzell with Christ as a child of God through the waters of Baptism. Along with Oliver, the Spirit has called Deb, Kay, Beth, Jody, Jeff, and Barb, as workers with us in this body we call St. Paul Lutheran Church, that is the body of Christ. But we rejoice NOT that we are any different, we rejoice that we are called and recognized by God to be gifted with the promise of grace, the promise of salvation, and the ability to share and to proclaim, NOT just in word or speech, but in truth and in action, the Good News of Jesus Christ through acts of simple courtesy and respect, and acts of grace and mercy. So may we as the psalm reminds us today:

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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Last week in our Gospel lesson we heard that as Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem, he sent messengers out ahead of him. Today we hear that Jesus sent seventy more messengers out ahead of him. And like all of those messengers, we too are sent with a call to discipleship each week...but how do we perceive discipleship and what do we consider when we hear, “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord”? In my former life as a musician, “go in peace” sounded somewhat like last call in some of the night-clubs, biker-bars, and roadhouses I used to work in. At the end of the night, you heard something like, “You don’t have to go home, but you can’t stay here...so drink up and get on your way.” This is the most harmless order to close the bar that I’ll share but there were others that were much more “colorful” directives at two in the morning. So, is our instruction to “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord” just simply a “last-call” demanding us to leave the church?

When we hear “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord” what do we understand this to mean for us? Do we close our faith like we close our hymnal and head out, only to return next Sunday, grab our spot in the church, open our hymnal along with our faith and begin to worship? Do we come here to church with the intent of being uplifted and carrying that spirit away from here and sharing it or does our call to discipleship close down with our last call of, “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord”? Arthur Schopenhauer the philosopher whose key focus was the primacy of the will, once said we love to buy books because we believe we are buying the time to read them. We all know the key to any book is taking that time to sit down and read it. Is our faith like those books that Schopenhauer is referring to...something we associate with in this building...only with the good intention of making ourselves better rather than actually using it “out there” one day?

In our world today though, there seems to be this notion that we can and should be able to obtain knowledge without taking the time to learn or experience. We show up here in the church with good intentions, patients, and open hearts to learn, to discover, and to enjoy all that we figure will make us righteous. But like that time we buy with the intention of reading that book, our faith is not something we can put on a shelf to look at later when we have the time...we cannot truly claim a faith until we engage with it...and engage in it with others. But unfortunately, the faith we seek out is a self-centered theology of glory that seeks a god who will make me a smarter and a more powerful person in order to show others that I know all about the Bible and I’m a good and decent person who wants to save the downtrodden with my notions and understandings...but do it all on my terms and on my time.

Today in our Gospel lesson, Jesus tells us that our faith comes with no provisions...our faith does not assure us power, glory, or righteousness, our faith merely assures us vulnerability and a promise of salvation. As people of faith, we are the vulnerable sheep among the wolves. God has gathered this mass of busted human beings into this assembly we call the church and it’s in this assembly we find God at its center in Word and in Sacrament. Bonhoeffer said this about this gathering:

The Church does not need brilliant personalities but faithful servants of Jesus and the brethren. Not in the former but in the latter is the lack. The Church will place its confidence only in the simple servant of the Word of Jesus Christ because it knows that then it will be

guided, not according to human wisdom and human conceit, but by the Word of the Good Shepherd.¹

We as sheep are called, and we are blessed to be faithful followers of that Word, but in that call of discipleship it is assumed as a call to be powerful, almighty saviors, rather than disciples who are sent vulnerably and *in need of hospitality*. St. Paul very eloquently reminds us in his letter to Rome that we have been blessed in the grace to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ; I liken this blessing and this call that is before us this morning in our Gospel to the Acts of the apostles when the disciples were locked up and then flogged by jealous Sadducees for healing and teaching in the name of Jesus. We hear in Acts:

⁴¹ As they left the council, they rejoiced that they were considered worthy to suffer dishonor for the sake of the name. ⁴² And every day in the temple and at home they did not cease to teach and proclaim Jesus as the Messiah. (Acts 5:41-42)

I know what I am about to say will seem very odd and just plain down wrong if it is taken out of context, but please listen closely to what I believe the instructions of Jesus mean for us as disciples. Jesus is NOT calling us to go and change people or the world, Jesus is sending us to accept the people, calling us to meet people where they are and not where we want them to be or think they ought to be. We are called and sent to teach others the WORD, teach others about the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ, not only with our words but with our actions. Furthermore, Jesus is NOT telling the disciples to “act” poor or impoverished, he is saying to be genuine...to fully understand others, to engage with others where they are...and not where we want them to be. We are sent as guests of others. Listen again to what Jesus is saying and how these disciples are being sent:

³ Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. ⁴ Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. ⁵ Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!' ⁶ And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. ⁷ Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the laborer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. ⁸ Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; ⁹ cure the sick who are there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'

It doesn't say that when you enter a town or a house that right away the town goes condo and all the houses become mansions and all prosper...but we tend to think this when we hear the Kingdom of God has come near or we associate the Kingdom of God with prosperity. Do we really understand what the Kingdom of God coming near truly means? The Kingdom of God coming near does not mean power and prosperity for disciples, rather it is the deeds of Jesus Christ, it is service, it is vulnerability or as I said last week...it is following without reservation or hesitation and with it comes the suffering that accompanies discipleship. Once again, as I did last week, I quote Dietrich Bonhoeffer on discipleship and what he has said about following Jesus:

It (*meaning discipleship*) is laid on every Christian...(discipleship is part of our faith). The first Christ-suffering that everyone has to experience is the call which summons us away from our attachments to this world. It is the death of the old self in the encounter with Jesus Christ. Those who enter into discipleship enter into Jesus' death. They turn their living into dying; such has been the case from very beginning. The cross is not the terrible

¹ Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Life Together, A Discussion of Christian Fellowship*. San Francisco: Harper & Row Pub, 1954, page 109.

end of a pious, happy life. Instead, it stands at the beginning of community with Jesus Christ. Whenever Christ calls us, his call leads us to death.²

Bonhoeffer, like Jesus is reminding us that following, or discipleship, and even our faith itself, in some sense, is not calling us to literally die or to commit suicide, but our call to discipleship or to follow means to put aside our *provisions*...provisions for Jesus at that time were in that time, our purse, our bag, our sandals...but today, we can say our provisions can be our own wants and needs, our own judgments, our own hatreds, prejudices, and fears...to put ourselves and our egos aside and meet people where they are without judgment or assumptions about them...to be genuine, true, and open to others...and in this...both them and us experience just how near the Kingdom of God truly and simply is. Listen again to the words of St. Paul to the Galatians:

¹ My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted. ² Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Paul goes on to remind us:

May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. (Gal 6:14)

May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ reflects what Paul writes earlier in this same Epistle about the believer's unity with Christ:

¹⁹ For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; ²⁰ and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Gal 2:19-20)

Paul's compulsion to gently restore the sinner is not based simply on his own hope for mercy someday, but on the more profound point that it is no longer he who lives, but Christ in him, and it is the character of Christ to forgive the sinner. Today may we be reminded that all die to our sins, but all our sins and transgressions are NOT met with a punishment of wrath or vengeance, but they are met with the spirit of gentleness, and the life we now live in the flesh we live by faith in the Son of God, who loved us all and gave himself for us.

And today, that same Spirit of Gentleness joins little Oliver Ryan Hartzell with Christ as a child of God through the waters of Baptism. Along with Oliver, the Spirit has called Deb, Kay, Beth, Jody, Jeff, and Barb, as workers with us in this body we call St. Paul Lutheran Church, that is the body of Christ. But we rejoice NOT that we are any different, we rejoice that we are called and recognized by God to be gifted with the promise of grace, the promise of salvation, and the ability to share and to proclaim, NOT just in word or speech, but in truth and in action, the Good News of Jesus Christ through acts of simple courtesy and respect, and acts of grace and mercy. So may we as the psalm reminds us today:

⁷ Bless our God, you peoples; make the voice of his praise to be heard,
⁸ who holds our souls in life, and will not allow our feet to slip.

² *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Volume 4, Discipleship*. Translated from the German Edition, Edited by Martin Kuske† and Ilse Tödt. Minneapolis: Fortress Press paperback edition: 2003. Chapter Four, "Discipleship and the Cross" page 87. (Parenetical parts are my words to clarify)

For we know now that our feet will not slip because our names are written in heaven in the blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. So, as our worship comes to a close, you don't have to take your faith home, but it can't stay here...go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen