

INI

St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
July 18, 2021
8th Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: Amos 7:10-15 Ephesians 1:3-14

Hymns: 27; 363; 307; 309

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Mark 6:7-13

And He called the twelve to *Himself*, and began to send them out two *by two*, and gave them power over unclean spirits. ⁸He commanded them to take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bag, no bread, no copper in *their* money belts— ⁹but to wear sandals, and not to put on two tunics.

¹⁰Also He said to them, “In whatever place you enter a house, stay there till you depart from that place. ¹¹And whoever will not receive you nor hear you, when you depart from there, shake off the dust under your feet as a testimony against them. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!” ¹²So they went out and preached that *people* should repent. ¹³And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed *them*. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: What's really important?

How a person answers that question goes a long way in defining that person. There are many people who are *really* into their careers. They are often looked upon as being very disciplined, very dedicated. Professional athletes in our day and age are often seen as being very disciplined. The big names in sports, the ones that win the championships, that lead whole teams of superb athletes to championships are often that disciplined and dedicated, and function as leaders that can inspire others. But what makes them that way is what they deem as most important. They will do what is necessary to accomplish that which they consider to be most important. It may be personal success, achieving the goal of being the best. Others think of leisure as being most important. Still others money.

What about Jesus? What was and IS most important to Jesus? Many in this world don't know. They think they know but they don't really quite get it. They may answer that the welfare of other people is what's important to Jesus. Well, that's right, but not quite right enough. If we are to learn of Him, and learn from Him what ought to be most important in our lives, we need to define that question a little more. We need to see and understand exactly what it was that drove Jesus in His life to the end of His life, actually what it is that occupies Jesus **now** as our risen and glorified Lord. Ultimately it was and is the *spiritual* welfare of people that is **most** important to Jesus.

To secure people's spiritual welfare Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice, bearing in His own body the sins of the world. He went to the cross where Jesus endured the curse of God, the agony of hell for the **sinner**s of the world. That is the gospel of our salvation. But for sinners to benefit from this tremendous act of love and sacrifice they need to hear about it and believe it was done for them. With the spiritual welfare of sinners being Jesus' greatest concern, He saw to it that this gospel of God's love and forgiveness would be proclaimed to the world.

Our text this morning records one of the events revealing how --

THEME: Jesus Established the Gospel Ministry.

It really all began much earlier. The Lord Jesus had specifically called the twelve disciples to follow Him, and they began their course of training for their life work as apostles, or special messengers of the gospel. Our text reveals that --

I. The Lord Calls Messengers of the Gospel.

“And He called the twelve to Himself, and began to send them out two by two.” (Mark 6:7a) Such a vital point is made in the first verse of our text that we need to consider it carefully. Jesus called the disciples to Himself for the purpose of giving them a special mission. And then Jesus sent them out, in pairs on this occasion, to fulfill that gospel mission He had entrusted to them.

So often in our society people take this upon themselves. They assume for themselves the calling to publicly proclaim the gospel and start their own ministry. Oftentimes the focus of that ministry is off base. It isn't about the gospel of a crucified and risen Savior who brings forgiveness of sins to a lost world. It becomes more about what we ought to do instead of what Christ has done for us. Often the ministry is promoting a list of social programs, and political agendas that may have objectives in and of themselves. The focus is on human efforts to make the world a better place, rather than the divine efforts of Christ crucified to secure eternal life for a fallen mankind.

Be that as it may, there is clearly a failing to understand that the ministry does not belong to any one individual. It is the Lord's! It is the Lord who calls. With the twelve it was a direct call without any intermediary. With us today the Lord calls through His Church to whom He has entrusted the ministry of the gospel. It is through congregations of the believers, cells of the church, that Jesus calls individuals to serve, and so it is the Lord who sends His messengers out with the gospel.

This is important because the authority is the Lord's. Pastors are often challenged concerning the message which they deliver. It is a basic challenge that what is delivered are simply the thoughts and ideas of that individual, and there is no more authority in those words than what one hears from individuals in the world regarding

what is right and wrong, what is sinful and what is righteous, what one must do to be saved!

A called messenger of the gospel acting in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ possesses the authority of Christ in the message he delivers. As long as the messenger is faithful the message is true and possesses the authority of Christ Himself. This can only be true and yet is always true when **Jesus** calls, when Jesus sends, and when Jesus' message is delivered.

The establishment of the gospel ministry goes beyond the calling and sending.

II. The Lord Provides and Empowers the Gospel Ministry.

“(He) gave them power over unclean spirits. ⁸He commanded them to take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bag, no bread, no copper in their money belts— ⁹but to wear sandals, and not to put on two tunics” (v. 7b-10)

These instructions of the Lord may have tested the faith of the disciples. They were going on a journey, and Jesus told them not to take along provisions for that journey? Jesus also assured them that they would possess power over unclean spirits. These seem to be instructions that pressed credulity! And yet that is what they were to do, and they obeyed the Lord as they set out with confidence.

Confidence in ministry is so important. It takes away the doubts and the fears and trepidation that one might not be up to the task. Of course one is not up to the task. But then the success of the mission does not belong to the individual. It belongs to the Lord. The Lord provides the power and authority for those who are called to serve in the ministry of the gospel.

The Lord will also provide the resources that are needed to carry out the work He sets before His called servants. He continues to do this today in the same way that Jesus provided for the twelve as He sent them out to the surrounding towns and villages where He Himself would eventually come to minister to the people. How did Jesus provide for the disciples? He opened the hearts of those who heard the message the disciples were to share with the people.

When people hear that wondrous gospel of God's love and forgiveness it changes hearts. It softens hard hearts, and brings them first relief from sin's oppression, and then gratitude for the gospel's grace. When hearts are opened provision is made for the Lord's messengers. So it was for the twelve, and so it is yet today.

I serve you as a called servant of the Word. I did not come with my own resources, but as you gratefully received the Word, so you have blessed me providing for my temporal and material needs. The Lord has opened your hearts to support the work of Jesus' called servants, not only here at St. Paul's but in our schools and in the foreign mission fields. Material needs and provisions for ministry are freely and generously given so that those who proclaim the gospel may remain focused on that all important work, the work Jesus regarded as most important, caring for the spiritual wellbeing of lost and condemned sinners.

Jesus sent the disciples on their way with instructions not to look out for their interests but rather to be content with what was provided for them.

“Also He said to them, “In whatever place you enter a house, stay there till you depart from that place.”¹¹ And whoever will not receive you nor hear you, when you depart from there, shake off the dust under your feet as a testimony against them. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!” (v. 10-11)

It is most instructive for the called servant and all those who testify of their faith in Jesus that Jesus anticipated that the message of the gospel would not always be well received. Indeed, Jesus anticipated that the disciples would encounter rejection. His words of instruction were insightful. Remember it is not the messenger that is being rejected but the one who sent the messenger. Also, the disciples were to shake the dust off their feet, and not take it to heart. They were not to allow rejection by some to stop them in bringing the message of the gospel to others. Those who rejected the message would answer to the Lord, and their fate would not be one to envy.

The disciples were called and sent by the Lord, and they found --

III. The Lord Accomplishes Great Things through the Gospel Ministry.

We read of the disciples' obedient response in the closing words of our text: "So they went out and preached that *people* should repent.¹³ And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed *them*." (v. 12-13)

What did the disciples talk about as they moved from town to town? They preached that people should repent! What does that message entail? The first thought that may come to one's mind is that people should be sorry for their sins. They need to turn away from the path on which they are walking and find a new and different direction for life. In the world some people "*turn over a new leaf*" and leave behind a life of crime and live life on the straight and narrow. Is that all the disciples promoted? No, indeed. True repentance does entail a turning away from sin, but it must include the one thing needful to which one does turn. That one thing people need is redemption and cleansing in the blood of Christ. Preaching repentance means preaching Jesus and presenting Jesus as the Savior who was promised by God to deliver a fallen mankind from sin and death. Preaching repentance is presenting the hope of eternal life that we have in a crucified and risen Savior. He not only died for us but has gone before us into heaven to prepare a place for us, that we may be with Him in the glories of heaven. It is this message of the gospel that takes hold of the hearts of fallen sinners and brings them back to God. The Holy Spirit works powerfully through this message to draw sinners to repentance.

So, this is what the disciples preached as they traveled from town to town. They presented to others the same message that had already brought joy and hope to their hearts and lives. They prepared the people many small towns and villages for the Savior's arrival that they might hear Him and be blessed with life and salvation.

This is the message we share with people today. Jesus loved us and gave Himself for us that we might have life through faith in His name. This is a powerful message. It is more powerful than the

forces of evil. Even as the disciples cast out demons and healed people, so we also wield the power of the gospel. With this gospel, which is the sword of the Spirit, we cast out the darkness of sin and the hopelessness of eternal death. Even as we have peace with God, we share the message of that peace with others.

What's really important in life? We give our greatest attention and energy to whatever it is that we regard as most important. All too often what's most important in our minds, in our lives is actually quite superficial. Let us remember what Jesus considers most important, the salvation of sinners! And so He has called and sent forth messengers of the gospel to call sinners to repentance and everlasting life. May Jesus' mission take that place of greatest importance in our hearts and lives.

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.