

Second Sunday of Pentecost, Year A, June 14, 2020 UPMP

PRELUDE: "There's within My Heart a Melody" #393

WELCOME

CALL TO WORSHIP: "Christ be our Light" (paper copy)

SCRIPTURE:

*It is the second Sunday after Pentecost, the second Sunday of walking with the Holy Spirit, and we build off the Great Commission.*

**Matthew 9:35-10:8, (9-23)**

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, [DOO-DAH!] and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax-collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.

These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment. Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for laborers deserve their food. Whatever town or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave. As you enter the house, greet it. If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town. Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.

"See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of them, for they will hand you over to councils and flog you in

their synagogues; and you will be dragged before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them and the Gentiles. When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you at that time; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next; for truly I tell you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes."

HYMN AFTER SCRIPTURE: "He's Got the Whole World in his Hands" #331

Sermon:

Whew! I read that scripture quickly...why? Because that is how I imagine it being spoken—with an elevation of emotion and perhaps urgency.

But it's really a line in that first paragraph that sits with me. "The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few."

And what a great place to enter the teachings of Jesus, here in the Season of Pentecost, where we are awakened by the Holy Spirit stirring within us and around us.

We know, friends, God's last word, and that is Love. Even in trying times we know that no amount of anger or criticism or violence or disorder can eclipse that most holy of messages. God has the last word, and the last word is Love. And we are equipped to speak that word and to share that word and to live that word in our every breath.

I think of that next paragraph, where Jesus summons the disciples and gives them "authority over unclean spirits"—Friends! Do you believe that you, as a disciple, have authority over unclean spirits? You do! YES! Because you know God's last word of love!

I mean, you can turn a blind eye to brokenness and anger around you, step to the other side of the street to avoid the pain and the hurt of others in your midst, you can turn off the news when it feels overwhelming, but in all of it, do you remember that God's last word is Love? Because it is by that authority that you live as a Christian. That you make your daily choices as a disciple. It is by that authority do you do what you do. God's love.

And that Love, it is not something to simply contemplate, or ponder. Christian faith is not simply something that occupies our curious and longing minds. Christian faith is to be engaged. Through the heart and into the hands. We are to live as Christians, not simply think like Christians. We are to live with that last word in all of our actions in life.

And we show up on Sunday not for our faith obligation, but to re-orient our lives and to recharge our batteries for the rest of the week!

Put it this way: my son spent a good amount of time this week jumping off cliffs, both up in the Boundary Waters and here locally. Now it freaks me out as a Dad, but I've done it plenty of times and I understand the joy he receives in doing it. And I tell him, you're landing is important, sure, but of equal importance is the point from which you step off. Make sure your footing is secure—no loose rock or gravel. Pay as much attention on where your jumping from as where you will land.

And that's what I think of Sundays, like this one. This service is not a destination of your faith—not a place that your faith lands, but rather it is a stepping off point. Is your footing secure? Your foundation? Are you ready to jump safely?

That's where the Holy Spirit comes in, friends. Centering you. Empowering you. Reminding you that you are not alone in your trials and tribulations and challenges as a disciple—we are all there with you. We're all paying attention to get a clearer sound of God's last word of Love so that it can echo through us, throughout our week.

It is not an easy culture to be a person centered on love. But nothing Jesus said here in scripture gave us any assumption that it would be. "I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves" He says to his disciples, "So be wise as serpents and innocent as doves."

See, we know this...we've shared these conversations, here, and in the life wisdom we have gained from many places:

Words don't matter if not backed up with action.

Likewise labels, or a declaration of belonging to a group or institution doesn't mean anything if not backed up by engaging in the values and mission of that institution. By practicing the work called forth in the mission and purpose. We call this ministry.

And for that matter, friends, the building doesn't matter if it is not occupied by people living into the purpose of the building.

We are called to be Christians engaged. We are called to engage in our every day lives God's ultimate message of Love.

"Wise as serpents and innocent as doves" indeed! But friends, it's not all work. It is not all reaction to brokenness and discord amongst us, though in our culture it may sure seem that way.

We exemplify love not just by standing up to the forces of darkness around us, we also exemplify love by living with a joy and comfort and balance—by thriving!

A cliché by now, perhaps, but I'll say it again: "They will know we are Christians by our Love"

I think of my most Holy moments. I think of the times that I am closest to God in my own heart—and friends, it is not when I am engaging pain and suffering and brokenness, no, that's the work I'm called to do.

I think of this week, up in the Boundary Waters, paddling my canoe on a still morning as the sun rose. It truly is my "happy place"—and God's presence is within and all around me.

And I sit with God and take stock of my life and the changes that have taken place since the last time I was out there paddling my canoe on a still morning as the sun rose.

And what a transition in life it has been since last time! I'm a lighter and happier and more peaceful person—as I've shared in so many testimonies throughout these past weeks. So many things are new.

And I have this quirky habit of lingering on words and phrases that arrive in that time, and because there is plenty of time and space to do so, I begin to turn them into songs that I sing to myself. This trip's phrase was poking fun at myself about how many things are new but how I still slip up and fall into old habits. So I sang: "I'm new at all this new"

But let me invite a new thing into your lives. Let the Holy Spirit stir within you, friends. Let God run wild through your soul. Go a little crazy with God's love—live it! Walk it, talk it, share it! Dance with it. Live into God's love like you truly are in love. It may feel a little awkward at first, and folks around you may roll their eyes at you, but honestly, what could be better than leaping fully into God's love and letting it fill you, and pour over you, and shine through you every step of your life?

What on earth could be a better hope and dream in life than that one?

And when it feels a little awkward, just sing it: "I'm new at all this new."

HYMN AFTER MESSAGE: "I Will Sing the Wondrous Story" #296

## JOYS AND CONCERNS

We will have fellowship downstairs, with healthy social distancing. We've prepared snacks in a safe way. Join us if you like.

Offering (thank you, also there's a plate out back)

Again, not naming names for the sake of video.

PASTORAL PRAYER

LORDS PRAYER

CLOSING HYMNS: "There is a Place of Quiet Rest" #342  
"Day by Day and with Each Passing" #561

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE: "Shine Jesus Shine"