

Holy Cross, Daggett and St. Mark, Wallace Lutheran Churches, Michigan

The Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

July 2, 2017

9:35-10:8

Jesus traveled through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every sickness. When he saw the crowds, he was moved with compassion for them, because they were troubled and downcast, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore pray that the Lord of the harvest will send out workers into his harvest."

Jesus called his twelve disciples to himself and gave them authority to drive out unclean spirits and to heal every disease and every sickness. These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James the son of Zebedee and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

Jesus sent these twelve out and commanded them, "Do not go among the Gentiles, and do not enter any town of the Samaritans. Go instead to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near!' Heal the sick. Raise the dead. Cleanse lepers. Drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give."

Tragedy often moves us to have compassion on people. Look at what happens when a tornado strikes or a fire destroys a home. Complete strangers are often moved to help one another. How come? Their hearts are stirred and filled with compassion for the hurting. Our gospel lesson calls on us to have compassion on people, but it isn't on people who are physically hurting. No, it is compassion for those spiritually hurting. How do we display this compassion?

“Jesus traveled through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every sickness. When he saw the crowds, he was moved with compassion for them, because they were troubled and downcast, like sheep without a shepherd.” The first and most important thing for Christians to remember is that people who don't know Christ are lost and hurting.

Jesus knew this important fact. He looked out on the multitudes following after him and he was filled with compassion for them. He saw what sin did to people. It plagued them with disease and sickness. It left them lost and confused. It left them troubled and downcast. Jesus' love for these people drove him to visit them and share the message about salvation with them. Jesus compassionately looked at these people as lost and helpless sheep.

How often don't we forget this important fact about people who don't know Jesus? It can be hard to have compassion when the person is mean to you or their sinful lifestyle frustrates and disgusts you. It can be hard to have compassion on someone because you get big ego boost when you look down on someone. I get it, but selfish attitudes and sinful arrogance give the wrong impression about Jesus to those who don't know him.

How can you and I get rid of this selfish attitude and make our savior look better to those who don't know him? Remember the compassion Jesus has had on you. **“When (Jesus) saw (you), he was moved with compassion for (you), because (you) were troubled and downcast, like (a) sheep without a shepherd.”** What moved Jesus to compassion for you? By nature, you and I don't know Christ. We are his enemies, but Jesus didn't want us to remain his enemies who were held captive by sin.

Jesus did not want to see you and me troubled and downcast because of our sins. He didn't enjoy seeing us plagued by our sins or wandering around lost and confused by them. Jesus came to this earth to show you and me his compassion for us. He willingly took on our sins, carried our sorrows and was pierced to forgive our sins of self-righteousness and arrogance. Jesus' compassion for us is the reason we have compassion on those who don't know him.

How can we display this compassion for people who don't know Jesus? **“Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore pray that the Lord of the harvest will send out workers into his harvest.’”** Jesus commands us to pray that the people who don't know him might change into people who believe in him. He says the people who don't know him are like a harvest waiting to be gathered and brought in.

What might be some reasons Jesus wants us to view people who don't know him like a harvest waiting to be gathered in? Well, what do unbelievers sometimes do to Christians? Unbelievers often cause great

harm to Christians on earth. Unbelievers often reject the good news about Jesus which believers try to share with them. As a result, Christians can sometimes go into siege mentality and picture the world as us (we're the good guys) versus them (the bad guys).

These are some incredibly strong temptations which believers face when thinking about unbelievers. Yet, what does Jesus want us to do for these people? **"Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore pray that the Lord of the harvest will send out workers into his harvest.'"** Jesus wants us to pray for these people. How come? The funny thing about prayer is it makes it hard for you to stay mad at someone when you are praying for them and their souls.

Think about the people on your personal prayer list. What is your attitude towards them? Are you mad at them for being sick? No, you pray for them to get better. Are you upset that they might have mismanaged their money? No, you ask God to provide for them. What does it say about you when you pray for someone who hates you? Doesn't it display your compassion for them because you want them to follow the same savior you do?

Not only can we pray for people who don't know Jesus, but there is something else we can do for them too. **"Jesus called his twelve disciples to himself and gave them authority to drive out unclean spirits and to heal every disease and every sickness. These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James the son of Zebedee and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector;"**

"James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. Jesus sent these twelve out and commanded them, 'Do not go among the Gentiles, and do not enter any town of the Samaritans. Go instead to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near!' Heal the sick. Raise the dead. Cleanse lepers. Drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.'"

Jesus sent workers out to reach those who did not know him. He gave them a message to share and he promised to bless their efforts in reaching the lost. How does this impact us? Jesus promise still applies to you and me today. Jesus still wants us to send workers out to reach those who do not know him. He has given us the message he wants us to share with them and he has promised to bless our efforts to reach out to these people.

How do we do this? One important way we help share the good news about Jesus is by the offerings we bring to support mission work. Picture your offering envelopes (if you have a set) and what is one line which is on them? There is a line which says "Missions" on it. You are supporting our synod's efforts to reach people who do not know Jesus when you write an amount on this line of your envelope. This money helps to directly support workers or those who train the workers.

Yet, mission work is about more than just money. You can pray for the Lord to bring his harvest in. You can also play a part by inviting people to church and when someone asks, "Why?" You can say that you want this person to get to know Jesus. He's a pretty great guy and his compassion will change your life. May God bless our efforts to display Christlike compassion for the lost. Amen.