

The Eighth Sunday After Pentecost

July 26, 2009

Amazing Grace Lutheran Church - Pastor Chip Wilke

Mark 6:7-13

Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits. These were his instructions: "Take nothing for the journey except a staff--no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear sandals but not an extra tunic. Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. 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." They went out and preached that people should repent. They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.
(NIV)

In 1876 a Church Mission Society was set to send out eight missionaries into Africa. At a farewell meeting before the committee of the church each missionary said a few words. The last speaker was the youngest of the group, a young man by the name of Alexander Mackay. "There is one thing," he said, "which my brethren have not said and I want to say. I want to remind the committee that within six months they will probably hear that one of us is dead." All eyes were fastened on him as he went on: "Yes, it is not likely that eight English men should start for Central Africa and all be alive six months after. One of us at least---it may be I---will surely fall before that. But when the news comes, do not be cast down, but send someone else immediately to take the vacant place." Those words of Mackay "send someone else immediately" were still ringing in the director's ear when news came that one of the eight had died. Mackay's words were also a reminder of the importance of the mission.

This morning we hear of another group sent out to do mission work. They are sent out by Jesus Himself. Jesus who taught, "***The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field,***" sends out twelve of His own to do the work. We are reminded that this work is important. This work is serious. This work has urgency. This work is an awesome privilege. Consider all these things as **Jesus sends out disciples in His Name. With instructions to trust His provisions. With the authority of His Word.**

After Jesus was rejected in His home town, Jesus went from village to village throughout Galilee teaching and preaching, helping and healing. Now Jesus decides it is time for His chosen Twelve to get involved in the work. We read: "***Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two.***" By sending these apostles (which is a word that actually means those sent out) on this rather short mission Jesus was accomplishing a couple of things. These men who had followed Jesus and learned from Jesus for some time now would get some on the job training for the future. At the same time they were also able to help cover more ground than Jesus could have covered alone. The vital message of repentance could reach more people. So Jesus calls them together and sends them out.

Listen to what Jesus says as He sends them out: "***These were his instructions: "Take nothing for the journey except a staff--no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear sandals but not an extra tunic. Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you***

leave that town.” Don’t these instructions seem a bit surprising? Basically Jesus tells them to go as they are. They were to take nothing else but the sandals they are wearing and the staff in their hand. A staff was not just for walking but also for protection from animals. Think of the questions they must have had. What would they eat? Where would they stay? How would they stay warm?

Jesus did not want anyone to get the impression they were out for financial gain so they brought no bag or literally money purse or wallet. They did not even bring any loose change with them. In the same way they were not to go about town searching for the best accommodations. If someone welcomed them in they were to stay with them until they left that town. But why bring no bread? Why only one tunic when most would bring two because the outer one would keep one warm at night? Why these specific instructions at this time? Please understand Jesus does not give these instructions to everyone. This was a special circumstance and in fact later Jesus changes His instructions.

So what was Jesus doing? He was teaching His apostles a lesson in trust. These disciples needed to learn to rely on their Lord and Master. The Lord would provide. They would lack nothing. The people who heard the good news would provide for the needs of these men for as Jesus says and Matthew records ***“a worker is worth his keep.”*** So Jesus has them take nothing for the journey. Jesus wants them to trust in His provisions. He wants them to know what He would later teach them and that is He would be with them always.

Although we do not have these specific instructions Jesus wants us to learn the same lesson. We are to learn to trust in God to provide. Jesus says: ***“I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life ?”*** How much time do we spend worrying about clothes and food and home and paying all the bills? How often do we lack the trust that Jesus asked of His apostles and He asks of us? How does chasing after all these things even pagans run after take away from what we should be focused on and doing?

Jesus wanted nothing to interfere with the mission He gave His disciples. So He gives them instructions to trust His provisions. Jesus also sends them out with the authority of His Word. That powerful word Jesus gave to His apostles included the special authority over evil spirits and the power of healing. This would help people identify them as Jesus’ apostles since Jesus Himself did these things while on earth. The apostle Paul speaks of these as marks of an apostle in 2 Corinthians when he writes: ***“The things that mark an apostle--signs, wonders and miracles--were done among you with great perseverance”*** (12).

Jesus also tells them this ***“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.”*** What does this mean? When people do not welcome Jesus’ disciples or listen to what they have to say the disciples are to dust their sandals. What is this all about? It was a visible way of the disciples saying that if you reject this message you will have none of the blessings of this message. Jews would shake the dust off their feet when leaving Gentile cities so by

wiping even the dust off their feet the apostles are stating these people are no better than the heathen or pagan unbelievers. Jesus says to wipe this dust as a testimony against them. On the day of judgment this would be a testimony that the clear word of God was spoken to them but they rejected it. This was a pronouncement of judgement. This was the harshest preaching of the law. By rejecting Jesus and refusing to listen to His Word the disciples were to make it clear these people were cut off and heading for hell.

What a reminder of the seriousness of their work? What a reminder for us? For we go into this world with the authority of Jesus' Word just as these disciples did. If necessary Jesus gives us, His church, the authority to tell a unrepentant sinner "*your sins are not forgiven.*" And when a sinner repents Jesus gives the church the power and privilege of announcing the joyful message: "*Your sins are forgiven.*" When we speak God's Word and people listen to us they are listening to Jesus and if they reject us they are rejecting Jesus. As we go with God's Word into the world as even our church's mission statement says *Amazing Grace is God's Word in Action*, we go about the most important work of all. There is only one way to heaven. There is only one Savior from sin. All need to come to repentance and faith in Jesus. All need to see their sin. All need to know that Jesus came to save them from sin.

We know that is exactly what Jesus did. Jesus who sent out these disciples lived a righteous life for these disciples. Jesus who sent out these disciples went to the cross for these disciples. Jesus went to the cross for us. Jesus carried there our lack of trust, our failures to speak His word faithfully and boldly, our every other damning sin, and Jesus was cut off and judged. For our sin and the sins of all Jesus shed His blood and died. And on the third day the verdict came back that our sin is now paid for and we are free. We have good news that never gets old or spoils. Our sins are forgiven. Our Savior has done it.

Now go. That's all that needs to be said. Go with the authority of God's Word. Go with the message of sin and grace. Go with a message of repentance. That is what the apostles did. We read: "***They went out and preached that people should repent. They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.***" They went as Jesus instructed and did what Jesus said. We are not told what happened. We are not given any results. We are just told that they went. Jesus still sends disciples out in His Name. Pray for them. In fact, I see a room just full of them. May we go trusting in our Lord and with the authority of His Word. There is no mission greater than being Christ's witnesses. There is no greater privilege than sharing in His work. May we faithfully carry it out and leave the results in our Lord's gracious hands. Amen.