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St. John's Lutheran Church of Burlington
6 July 2025

Sermon on Luke 10:1-12,16-20

Worship Theme:

THE NEED FOR WORKERS

Everyone who has seen the grace of God will, whenever the opportunity arises, serve as a witness for Christ. However, Scripture teaches that there is also a need for individuals for whom gospel proclamation is their full-time focus. These workers are called by God himself through the Church to proclaim law and gospel in some public capacity. Jesus taught there will always be a need for such workers. "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few." (Luke 10:2)

Sermon Theme: "Chosen Messengers"

1. Sent by Grace
2. Sent with Grace

After this, the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. Why did Jesus do that? To us, it may seem like one of the most natural things, because we're so used to it. We are incredibly unsurprised to find human beings acting as messengers of God in the world – it's the only way our churches and schools function! We expect our churches to have pastors and our schools to have teachers. It seems almost crazy to think of having a Christian church that gathers regularly for Worship and Bible Study yet never has a human being involved in the process. But why?

Maybe this is something we haven't thought much about before, but why do we expect human beings to be involved in the process of publicly proclaiming the Word of God? It's such an incredibly lofty, mighty, and powerful thing! The Word of God has the entire power and authority of God behind it, which means this is something human beings shouldn't dare touch, never mind use! If we're surprised by that thought, we shouldn't be, and the reason is right in front of us every week in worship. There isn't a single Sunday we gather here that doesn't involve us talking about our sin. This may seem like the most basic thing, and maybe you've heard it so many times before that your mind wanders during the confession and you just say the words without thinking about them. Or maybe you are so used to hearing sermons structured around Law and Gospel that you can almost preach the pastor's sermon to him before he begins, because you already know what it's going to say: we're sinners, we deserve death and hell, etc., etc... Sin doesn't surprise us.

Yet for some reason, not having any pastors or teachers might. Imagine coming to church on Sunday morning or Monday evening and there isn't a pastor. Or imagine coming into school on a Wednesday morning and there are no teachers. Not because they slept in, but because there are none. We would be quite surprised by that! But there are two truths which demonstrate why there should be no pastors, teachers, or full-time gospel workers. First, God doesn't need human help. Second, humans are worthy neither to give nor receive anything in his kingdom.

In other words, there should be no human **chosen messengers** of God ever. When Jesus appointed seventy-two people to go ahead of him, it certainly wasn't because he needed help. Jesus is God, so Jesus has all the power in the universe and more! Jesus' power is truly unlimited. God created everything out of nothing, using only his powerful Word. Even while Jesus was walking on earth in a human body, he still had every bit of power he wanted. There never has been and never will be anything that people can do for God which he cannot do better himself.

So why did Jesus choose to involve people? Grace. He chose to involve us because of grace, God's undeserved love for people. This is the only explanation there can be for why sinful human beings are involved in holy kingdom work for God. That was also true for the seventy-two Luke tells us about. Even though we know almost nothing at all about them, we can confidently say that all seventy-two were sinful people just like me and you. Nothing about them made them worthy of being his messengers, speaking for God, receiving anything from him, or giving anything from him to others. They should never have been chosen or sent!

But Jesus called them anyway to be **chosen messengers sent by grace**. What these people didn't deserve, Jesus freely gave. He taught them his Word, he gave them the gift of faith, he forgave all their sins, he filled them with his peace, and he sent them out to proclaim to others all the priceless blessings Jesus brings. **Jesus sent them by grace** and assured them that anyone who welcomed them would be welcoming him, and anyone who rejected them would be rejecting him – when these messengers proclaimed the kingdom of God, the fullness of God would be with them and God himself would be speaking through them.

What would their message be? The same one God's messengers have always been called to proclaim – law and gospel. They were to share the good news that peace was available for all in Jesus' name and that the kingdom of God had come near. But if people rejected them, the message needed to remind people what they are without God too. If people choose to reject God, it is abundantly clear that total destruction for eternity is their only destination. That has been the reality ever since the Fall into Sin – human beings on our own are headed for nothing except eternal destruction because of our sin. That's the law – it's necessary! And the greatest news ever is that God did something to change our eternal destination by sending Jesus to forgive us and save us. That's the gospel – it's necessary too!!

This message of God's Word absolutely changes hearts and lives. It has for thousands of years already and will continue to do so as long as the world exists. Could God proclaim this message by himself without any help at all? Yes, of course. Could he also use holy angels to proclaim it? Yes, he could do that too. But what does he do instead? He picks human beings to be his **chosen messengers**. Why? Because we're the ones who have lived the before and after, and we're the ones who know how amazing it is to experience God's saving grace.

Imagine someone has stage 4 cancer in their entire body. They're dying. There is absolutely no chance they can get rid of this cancer with anything they do, because it's just too much. No amount of healthy living, healthy eating, exercise, self-care, anything at all is going to even make a tiny dent in this cancer. It's

killing them quickly and completely and they can do nothing to stop it. But then one day, a doctor comes to see them and says, “I have the greatest news for you – we’ve found the cure! We can cure everything and this will save you!” Two things are going to happen – one, that person is going to receive that cure with the most incredible joy they’ve ever felt; and two, they are going to tell every other cancer patient they meet about this cure that can save them too.

That’s what it’s like to be a Christian, only it’s infinitely bigger than that. Because while cancer is one of the worst things people may experience, it can only happen in this world; it isn’t part of eternity. Sin can be, though. Sin can affect our eternal existence, and if it isn’t cured and taken away from us, it will continue to ruin our entire body and life both in this world and in hell forever. But there’s a cure – it’s Jesus. Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection have provided a perfect cure – sin taken away and gone forever, not even a trace left behind as we live in the unending glory, peace, and joy of heaven. So imagine someone comes and tells a sinner, “I have the greatest news for you – we have the cure! This will save you!” By the grace of God, his love which wraps this whole gift together, two things will happen: one, that sinner is going to receive the cure with the most incredible joy they’ve ever felt, knowing there was nothing they did to deserve it or make it possible – they’re simply receiving the most amazing gift ever; and two, they are going to tell every other sinner they meet about the Jesus who can save them too.

A couple weeks ago, we talked in worship about how that is something every Christian has the privilege of doing – everyone who has been given faith in Jesus and has been saved by him gets to go and tell other people about what Jesus has done. It’s something we can’t help but do! Every child of God, every Christian believer is called to share the good news of Jesus with others – it’s a great gift!

Today God adds a second layer to the conversation: he also wants people who will be involved in this work full time, proclaiming the good news of peace, forgiveness, and life in Jesus’ name as their career and profession. So God gives pastors, teachers, missionaries, and so many other full-time workers to his Church, and each one of them is a blessing and gift from him, his **chosen messengers** to his chosen people. I promise, I’m not trying to toot my own horn. I say this because every pastor and teacher also needs pastors and teachers. Every pastor and teacher we know is blessed by many other pastors and teachers in their lifetime, and not one of them would be doing what they do without those who went before them. No pastor or teacher has ever gone up to God and started listing all the reasons why he should pick them to work in his kingdom. Each one knows they are an unworthy servant. Why does God choose them then? He chooses them because his grace has already made an eternal difference in their lives – **his chosen messengers are sent BY grace.** And God chooses them because he still has more grace to give, and he can’t wait to give it – **his chosen messengers are sent WITH grace.**

Did you see the result that had in Luke 10? *The seventy-two returned with joy and said, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.” He replied, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that*

the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” The beautiful result of God sending his **chosen messengers** is that Satan falls and more people’s names are written in heaven.

Satan’s name means “accuser”, and he loves to live up to that name. He tries to play both sides of the game, both tempting us to sin and then berating us when we do, telling us that it’s no wonder we have such a rotten life and that God should never forgive us for this! But nothing silences and overthrows Satan faster than God’s grace. God’s grace forgives our sins and strengthens us to resist the devil’s temptations. Now Satan has nothing to say. He can try to tempt us, but we have power from God to stand up to Satan and say, “No, I won’t do this sin because God has a better plan for me than that.” And Satan can try to accuse us and remind us of all the bad things we’ve done, but we can look right at him and say, “Those things are all paid for and forgiven at the cross of Christ, and therefore they aren’t part of me anymore.” Satan loses all his power when faced with God’s grace.

And God wants his people to always remember and be encouraged and strengthened by that priceless good news. So he keeps sending messengers. In our church body right now, we often hear this verse: “*The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.*” We talk a lot about vacancies in churches and classrooms and how few pastors and teachers there are to go around. And it’s true we can always use more, and if you are thinking you might like to be a pastor or teacher, please talk to any of the ones we have here – we would love to have that conversation with you! But I think instead of moaning and groaning about how few there are, we are far better served by remembering why God gives us **chosen messengers** in the first place – because he still has more grace to give, and he lovingly invites people to spend their lives bringing it to others. It’s a privilege unlike any other, and every single person benefits from it. So boldly and confidently *ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field, to overcome all the power of the enemy, and to continue writing many more names in heaven.*

Does God need our help? No. Are any of us worthy to participate in this work? No. Why does God still **choose messengers** then? To keep giving us his grace, every day in this world until we reach the most beautiful final goal: the completion of our time on earth and the beginning of our eternity with Jesus in heaven. Grace upon grace upon grace, and God just keeps giving more.

Let’s pray:

Thank you, Jesus, for your **chosen messengers** whom you have **sent by your grace** and **sent with your grace**. Bless the work they do for the glory of your name, the good of your people, the growth of your kingdom. Amen!

And the peace of God which goes beyond all understanding will guard and keep our hearts and our minds through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen.