



“If you enter a town and it welcomes you, eat whatever is set before you.
Heal the sick, and tell them, **THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS NEAR YOU NOW.**”

Theme Hymn: “Let Us Go Now to the Banquet” ELW #523

First Reading

Acts 2:1-21

1 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. 5 Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. 6 And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. 7 Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? 9 Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." 12 All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" 13 But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine." 14 But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. 15 Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. 16 No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: 17 "In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. 18 Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. 19 And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. 20 The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. 21 Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

Gospel Reading

Luke 10

After this the Lord appointed seventy[a] others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. 2 He said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. 3 Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. 4 Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. 5 Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!' 6 And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. 7 Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the laborer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. 8 Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; 9 cure the sick who are there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'[b] 10 But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, 11 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near.'[c]

SERMON BY BISHOP JON V. ANDERSON

Grace to you and peace, sisters and brothers in Christ Jesus living in the Good News and sent to proclaim the Good News we know through Jesus...guided by the Holy Spirit. Amen.

God's Holy Spirit sometimes is working to calm us down and comfort us. God's Spirit also stirs things up. Agitates us.... Sets us free from our bonds.... Calls us to faith...Sends us to share.

In the Gospel lessons for today the Church, the community of Jesus, is deployed.... God sends people out, people like you and me. God works through people that God sends into this world to serve the mission of God. Notice Jesus **did not say build a building** to give birth to the Church, nor did he give directions to the seventy when he sent them out. Instead he sent them out two by two with a deep peace to serve the will of God and announce the presence and work of God. We are living in a time closer to the realities of the early church than we might imagine. God did great things back then. Look for the presence of God today doing great things, here and now.

Congregations today...and pastors today sometimes slide into an assumption that our mission is to keep the church of the past going as it has been. That is not the mission Jesus gives in the Lesson from Luke. We can over-focus on history and traditions. We can fall into thinking we are successful if we can afford to have a pastor and a building. Yet, all those tools exist to serve a deeper goal. **Our goal is to proclaim the Good News that God has come near....and is here now.** In Jesus, God reveals who God is and what God longs for in our world and lives through Jesus. God's Spirit works through people, ministers and God's Church to grow and sustain the lives of Christ followers loving their neighbors and God's world.

I love the Lesson from Luke, where Jesus sends people out **two by two** ahead of Jesus. He sends them out together. No self-sufficiency. We would be wise to remember to not try to go **alone in our spiritual life and ministries**. In fact, it is better to take someone with us when we go to visit the sick, study scripture or practice works of love. Jesus also does not teach a **three-year seminary course** before he sends people out to do ministry. Jesus sends them empowered by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the presence and work of our Gracious God. Jesus sends us out into our everyday lives to minister by loving our neighbors and sharing the Good News. God is for us and with us here and now. Your call to be a minister in Jesus happened in your baptism and continues all the days of your life.

We are moving deeper into a shift in how we imagine Church. We are shifting from a **ministry of performance**, where the pastor does the ministry for a congregation, towards a **ministry of participation**, where the church focuses on equipping the baptized ones. The Church exists to feed and grow you all deeper in faith, hope and love. It exists to encourage and support you to practice your faith and, like the 70, sends you out in the midst of life to share and develop your particular ministries – your contributions to building up the body of Christ. The Spirit is not only working in your pastor or your congregation's leaders lives but is stirring up and gifting you and all God's people to follow Jesus, love one another, and love God's world.

In Luke the author says this work will be dangerous. We are sent out like lambs among **wolves**. Ministry makes you vulnerable. The world is dangerous in more ways than the virus that has our attention these days. It is dangerous in more ways than the insidious virus of racism...which takes personal, communal and systemic forms. We need and are thankful for the ongoing guidance and work of God's Spirit when we feel vulnerable or unsure of what path we should take. Following Jesus opens us up – It cracks us open so we care about God's world in all of its brokenness and love our neighbors....all our neighbors. Sometimes the wolves hide inside of us personally or communally.

Jesus teaches that we need to be able to **travel light** in God's mission. In a time like this we are working fast and trying to sort out what matters and what does not. Crisis times are times of threat, but they are also times of opportunity. Winston Churchill said, "a crisis is a terrible thing to waste". So be sure to hold on to and carry the essentials of following Jesus along with the gifts of our Lutheran movement. Remember God keeps reforming each of us and God's Church to serve in many cultures and ways. God continues to send you and your community of faith, to grow Christians deep and wide in faith and engage the challenges of our time and communities. Remember God's Holy Spirit is here to stir you up, comfort, protect and guide you. Jesus did not leave us alone.

We often read this text when we are talking about the work of inviting people to consider a call to ordained ministry. While we do need God's Spirit to call out pastors and other leaders for God's Church, this lesson about needing laborers for the harvest is a call to all the baptized not just some. Jesus is talking to all of the seventy and to all of us when he says, your attempts to love and proclaim the Good News may be **welcomed or not**. You may not be the right messenger, or it may not be the right time. Trust that there will be another time or that God will use another messenger to do God's work.

Jesus came...loved, taught, healed, suffered, died.....and was raised again. Jesus sent God's Spirit to be with people back in time and today. He sends us to **cure and care for those sick in physical, emotional, spiritual and relational ways**. The Kingdom...the Reign of God has come near in Jesus and continues to come near in the

ongoing work of Christ's Spirit. God's Spirit gives us the power **to trust** even when we have many questions. God's Spirit gives us the power **to forgive sins** and trust God **to bring the healing and restoration**. God gives us the power to be healers with words of encouragement and reminders that **God's grace that has claimed us, will never let us go**. Sharing that God is faithful to us and hear now is our ministry. Our responses to God's presence and work sing out a hymn of gratitude. As Luther said, to be an evangelist is simply to be like one beggar telling another beggar where to find the bread.

The Kingdom has come near... Jesus keeps drawing closer to you and me. My favorite image of God's Holy Spirit is a memory I have of my father blowing breath into a newly born lamb that did not start breathing like most do upon entering the world. Dad cleared the lamb's throat with his finger, and gently blew in its mouth. When that did not work, he slapped the lamb on their chest and blew breath in again more forcefully. The lamb that was as good as dead, suddenly started to breathe. A few days later she was bouncing around the sheep pen. God comes through God's Holy Spirit and blows new life into us personally and communally day after day. God's presence stirs us up some days. God's Spirit comforts us other days. God sends you and me to be angels...messengers to this world that needs the Good News so much like we do day after day after day.

Imagine that...God can use you and me. Through Christ Jesus, God's Spirit can make all things possible.



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God's work. Our hands.