



Hear the Word

from Pastor James N. McEachran



Gather... Encourage... Equip... Send...

Second Sunday after Pentecost

June 18, 2017

Pentecost 2017: Equip Pack Lightly

Matthew 9:35-10:16

On these Sundays in June, we are marking a very clear focus on our mission, through the words GATHER, ENCOURAGE, EQUIP, AND SEND. Perhaps, it is as if someone were to ask---“WHY do you gather?” Or, “How do you encourage one another?” And, today, “In what ways are you equipped?” All of which begins to get at the ultimate question, “What is the mission of the Church, this congregation?”

I invite you to the Gospel Reading just shared.

Matthew 10 is a momentary pause in Jesus’ mission; a moment in time to look back to His time of “Word and Work.” And to mark the continuation of His work, through the calling of every disciple in every age and time.

1. Right Time --- Reconciled in Christ. The mission is defined. Jesus is on the move (urban and rural). It is important to note the aspects of mission: teaching, witnessing to the news of the kingdom, and healing. (Gk. Therpeuo/therapeutic as in working to relieve every human misery and pain.)

Literally, out of compassion because people were/are “worried and helpless,” “barely making it.” Here is the heart of Christ---Jesus has brought forgiveness and love, then prayer follows and the 12 are about to be sent as the answer to the prayer that they are called to pray. (“Pray that God will send out workers; now go with the heart of Christ which is compassion!”)

2. This Time --- Renewed and Well Equipped. After compassion and prayer, come gifts. “He gave them.” Gave them authority to bring healing in solidarity with the sick, the lonely, to be a healing presence in relationship as we are in Christ. And, then, become light and love, healing and life to all whose lives we touch.

Then, it seems that Jesus takes roll. Gathers and calls His own to draw near, names them into a fellowship which means they will never be in mission alone.

The names are known, some in conflict (Matthew is puppet, tax man for Rome, and Simon is a Zealot who in other settings might kill Matthew), some doubted, most fled; all a smorgasbord of humanity like you and like me. (Here are they, send them!) All of us are sinners transformed.

3. Next Time --- (Now Time) --- God's right time to say, "Yes." With them, we are called this day to pack lightly and GO. Imagine what we go through when we equip ourselves for a long trip. It takes me a day and that is just to figure out which books to take!

Here are His instructions: Keep focused on the arena of witness, know your message to share, don't sell your office for profit, reach and be with those who are receptive, speak and be peace to all, know when to move on!

The Breaking News is that wherever disciples witness to Jesus, the Kingdom is present, simply, humbly, God will provide, and Body of Christ, the Church will be seen as the workshop of the Holy Spirit. All of our days in mission must be lived within the setting of shalom...and to keep moving in the Lord, together as one.

How are You being equipped to serve the Lord? What gift do you bring to contribution and to share in faithful stewardship in Christ? Where are the places where your presence, our presence, HEALS and renews the face of the earth?

Remember what Jesus said to these dear ones of His in the Sermon on the Mount? "YOU are the light of the world...YOU are the salt of the earth. Like a city set on a hill." Not a demand, but a calling in which the Holy Spirit equips us to be FAITHFUL FILLED AND FAITHFUL!

This past week...moments of equipping:

- On Thursday afternoon, Jean and Marv appeared at my office door with a friend...a young women, Openda, a member of their first class at MaaSAE Girls School...in words of blessing she spoke of learning English from Marv, the challenge of the school, the community of care, support by Pastor Gard and Phyllis throughout her education. On her first visit to America, heading for the Twin Cities and New York, she wanted to see Saint Andrew's.
- She graduated from university and works in health administration in Arusha, eaged in her Christ-calling to help others. We visited, her story one of dramatic growth in a world where life for a woman is not often easy.
- We surrounded the Baptismal Font, prayers of thanksgiving and sending; a prayer shawl, pocket crosses, chocolate...standing the narthex in quiet. I never thought I could come and see you, this place...equipped in Christ through our congregation.
- An email from Dee J to look at *Seattle Times* front page. "A Bellevue Mom from Teen Mom to Graduate" ---Deambra, difficult home life, pregnant at 15, off to Colorado with her mom, a second child in high school. Graduated but fled to Delaware and ended up in Philadelphia, marriage, twins, domestic abuse, hid out for 2 years, sending her older boys to Colorado and found her way into school in a Community College.
- A Husky (as in U of W) helped her dream about Seattle and a place of new beginning. Her pastor encouraged her, gave her some money, and she came here. Lived in a hotel, then a shelter which connected her to affordable housing where she now lives. Imagine Housing. Stability, sons reunited, Mom in good relationship with her Mom.

Will begin working online towards teacher certification and is planning to become a foster parent.

"Lifted by others," she said, "I am ready to lift others." --- equipped in Christ and in partnership with our stewardship in His name.

- Equipped, each one of us as we worship God, learn more of Christ, and walk in His servant way. On this day finding new pathway to help equip our youngest as they grow in discipleship. "Little Disciple Tips." "Big Disciple Tips" as space is given for sermon notes, to annotate your bulletin for pray and engagement.

Beloved, we are a colony of heaven on earth and "treasured possessions" of God. As a "priestly kingdom" reconciled to God and to one another, called to remember that "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us."

In these past weeks, I have challenged, invited you to consider how we are an inviting church. As we gather and are renewed, how do we find ourselves faithful in witness like those who first spread the Gospel.

Let us remember our Baptismal covenant, encouraging and supporting one another, deepening our relationships in Christ within the safety of our fellowship/community that we might speak of our experience of life together? And how do we mark conversation with words that include our worship, our congregation, the opportunities we present as a healthy congregation? Who do we invite to gather with us that we might encourage others and mutually be equipped to be sent as the presence of God in Christ to the world?

May the Holy Spirit protect us, keep us discipleFIT, and lead us into the world to lift high the Cross of Christ. Amen!