



Hear the Word

from Pastor James N. McEachran



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

Third Sunday after Pentecost

June 25, 2017

Pentecost 2017: Send So, Go!

Matthew 10:24-39

On these Sundays in June, we have marked a clear focus on our mission, through the words GATHER, ENCOURAGE, EQUIP, AND SEND. The questions have included these: "WHY do you gather?" "How do you encourage one another?" "In what ways are you equipped?" Today the final of our sermons, "Where are you, are we, being sent into the world in God's mission?"

[I invite you again to the Gospel Reading just shared.]

Matthew 10 is a little like a team meeting before sending; a moment in time to look back to His time of "Word and Work." Recall these points from last week:

- Jesus gives disciples authority; now their own, His!
- Disciples are named; first, Peter, no surprise, and finally Judas, "the one who betrayed him." As if, Stanley Hauerwas writes, "We must learn, how we, like the disciples, would be tempted to betray Jesus and from that lesson discover what it means to be a faithful church."
- They are instructed to travel lightly and to Witness as they are able, where they find people receptive to their message and healing. And to keep moving.
- They forewarned that there will be persecution in communities and within families. Commitment leads to courage and the trust that the Spirit supports and speaks through them, through us.

Then, Jesus prepares them to be---

1. Faithful and Fearless. Live in the light; witness boldly, even "from the rooftops." There is but one word "BOLD." Stand up, speak out, risk to move beyond any sense of deficit, fear, doubt, or "standardized" witness. As in, start a housing group!

Mission is grounded in trust that provision will be present from God every step of the way. A theologian I trust once said, "Trust God or fear everything." As disciples live in a sea of change, within the frame of grace and empowerment, look at the sparrows and consider hair---numbered. And if anything is numbered it is cared for...valued in Christ forgiven and secured to serve---never looking back, forever forward where He leads the way. As in creating a strategic pathway for the days ahead. And that calls for...

2. Commitment and Stewardship. Did you catch it? "Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; BUT (Yes!) whoever denies me before others, I will also deny before my Father in heaven." Not the words we like to hear from Jesus...who also uses words that deepens, big time, a call to complete commitment for salvation does not always mean "peace."

In Jesus' time, the time of the apostles, to follow the way of Christ was often a dividing point within households...it meant leaving behind the household gods, the old practices, and I believe that Jesus trusted that to follow His way of love was to quickly enfold others through love and the assurance that to be in Christ would mean a rejection of the ways of the culture, the ways of self-serving, because Cross taken up means Cross shared in reaching out to the suffering, and to shower each day in the love and peace that only Christ can bring. Faithful stewards, who manage gifts given to grow the Body of Christ will never deal in scarcity. As in, a challenge from Laverne Szabo who, when serving on Council said, "It is time to be a 50/50 congregation"---50% for mission, 50% for the congregation as a platform of grace in Christ. How close might we become to that in a three year stewardship plan which keeps our hearts growing in BOLD mission response? All of which leads to...

3. Celebration...Courage...Contentment...Collaboration

These are the words that characterize a healthy, Christ centered church which consistently finds vision renewed by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is a faith community which is deeply relational and respectful of each member. If you will, to seek to live within the disciple-growth life of each other.

Jeremiah was fearful. Speaking the word of the LORD was risky. To venture forth did not seem safe OR comfortable. Through a season of teaching, confidence and optimism took hold with the word that life is fed through worship..."Sing to the Lord; praise the Lord." The Disciple's Oath? Worship first! Gather often!

Paul spoke to congregations in time of change. In Rome with newborn Christian finding new paths from the gods of Rome and the old cultural ways. At times we are overwhelmed anxious and afraid to look to the new horizons. Through words of comfort and challenge, he sinks all back into the font...buried with Christ, raised to new life. Water-Soaked, Spirit-drenched for newness. "So (we) must consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. The Disciple's Path? Out of the font, away from the Table as those who are encouraged and equipped for Courage and Contentment which is take to mean boldly serene with one another in mission here and to the ends of the earth.

Jesus says, "Just go, my beloved brothers (and sisters)." Get up, get out, and grow! And that just plain means, walk with us, heart to heart, hand in hand that others might take and see, know and grow, in the Lord who gives us everything we need for the journey. Most of all? Love one another. Our names posted after those first 12 who love to tell the story of Jesus and His love.

The cover of our bulletin is from a drone flown by the former Chief Pilot of Northwest/Delta Airlines. Just under the limit of the FAA, he caught picture of what Scott Lester has called our launching pad!

I like that image...through over 60 years, through over 33 years, our congregation has launched a good bit of good from Eastgate. As the Holy Spirit continues to open us all to new days of adventure and life. There are no risks. God is with us and we walk together. In deep collaboration.

Font. Table. I once saw these words: "Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving." May have been what Jesus has been sharing on these June Sundays. As in "Will you Come and Follow Me if I but call you name?"

I've got news for you. He has...and now the invitation includes an important four letters---R.S.V.P, Respond if you will, in Jesus' name, Amen!