

St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church -- Watertown, WI
Pastor Mark Gartner
Sermon for Pentecost 7 – July 8th and 11th

Luke 10:1-12

“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. He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road. “When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you. Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.

“When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God is near you.’ But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, ‘Even the dust of your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God is near.’ I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.

Dear children whose hearts have been changed by God's power.

Have you ever had the frustrating experience of talking to someone about how much they need to go to the doctor, and they just won't go? I would imagine that many of us have been on either end of that conversation – either trying to convince someone that they should take a few minutes and make an appointment about that problem they've been having for several months now, or trying to get someone to quit bothering us about our need to do so.

But what would it be like if, out of love and concern for someone whose health was in bad shape, you basically said, “Okay, if you're not going to go to the doctor, I'm going to bring the doctor to you.” And then you took it upon yourself to go to all the work to have the doctor come to the person about whom you were worried. “The doctor is coming,” you could tell him, “and he's going to help you get better.” I think it would be a lot more than frustrating if the person for whom you had done that would be angry with you or tell you to get out of his house or would himself leave the place and be nowhere around when the doctor came by to offer his help.

In a real way, spiritually, that is what Jesus is talking about in our lesson today, when he sends seventy-two messengers to go tell spiritually sick people, “The doctor is coming.” In verse 9, for example, at the bottom of the page, Jesus told those disciples, **“Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God is near you.’”** Not only would these disciples of Jesus have the ability to heal physical illnesses, but they would also have the joy of sharing the news about the kingdom of God, which could heal every spiritual woe, too. Yet, from what Jesus also told these seventy-two missionaries, there would be many who would want no part of the kind of doctoring help that Jesus came to give. In verses 10-11, at the very bottom of the page, Jesus said, **“But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, ‘Even the dust of your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you...’”**

What Jesus is saying is that not everyone wants to have the visit of the heavenly physician whom we know as Jesus Christ. But that doesn't change the fact that he's on his way, and this morning, as we continue to study the Gospel written by our dear friend Luke, the doctor, let's take these moments to see why we can be so happy and thankful to know and believe that

Theme: The Doctor Is Coming!

- 1. Through his messengers**
- 2. With his powerful, saving message**

The first thing we're going to think about is that that is **a message comes through God's messengers**. Last week we heard how Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem, setting his face in a determined and dedicated way toward the city in which he would suffer and die – and then rise again. But before that, he still had a lot of work to do – in fact, about six months of work to do. Part of that work involved going to as many towns and villages of Israel as he could, so that he could tell them about the kingdom of God – so that he could tell them that he wanted to rule in their hearts with his love and his forgiveness of their sins. What Jesus did was he chose seventy-two disciples, different from his twelve apostles, to assist him in that work by sending them ahead of him two by two to prepare the people for his arrival. They were, in effect, to tell the people, “The doctor is coming.”

What I think is very important to do is not to overlook a very obvious fact that can easily be overlooked. Jesus Christ, the holy Son of God, made use of frail, sinful human beings to help him with his work. They couldn't help him with the work of actually saving us, of course, but they could help with the work of telling people that they needed to be saved – and that that saving was going to be accomplished by Jesus. I have to tell you that that is a very humbling thing. As a pastor, it makes me tremble inside to think that I can stand up here as a person, who knows my own sins and weaknesses, and be commissioned by God to talk to you about your sins and weaknesses, while all along thanking God for the privilege from God to also speak in the name of Jesus about what Jesus has done to bury those sins and to strengthen those weaknesses.

And you know what... You're commissioned to do that, too. You may not have been ordained and installed into the public ministry, but by virtue of the fact that you are a child of God, you are a messenger of God. By how you live, by how you talk, by how you work, by how you play, by what you say to those who ask you about your Lord, your church, your future, you are just like those seventy-two disciples who were sent by Jesus into those Israelite cities. You and I are the messengers who are needed by the one who should by rights have no need for us. We, who so often neglect God or disobey God, get to participate in the work of God.

But there will come a time when we are no longer here to do that work, and even while we're still here on earth, there's no way that we can get that work done alone. That's why Jesus said in verse two, near the beginning, **“The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”** Sometimes I think we make the work of God too complicated... The work of making this world is far too complicated; that's why only God the Father could do it. And the work of saving this world is far too complicated; that's why only the sinless Son of God could accomplish it. And the work of converting anyone in this world to believe that is far too complicated; that's why only God the Holy Spirit could have the ability to make his home in a human heart.

But one major part of the work of getting enough people to tell people about God is to talk to God ourselves in prayer. **“Ask the Lord of the harvest,”** Jesus said, **“to send out workers into his harvest field.”** What are some of the things we can pray for? Pray that God will continue to give us more opportunities to meet people in this community so that we can tell them about Jesus. Maybe we'll have a number of opportunities to do that this week in our daily lives! Pray that God will continue to raise up more people in our congregation to be willing to invite others, to visit others, to welcome others, to tell others what great things Jesus has done, just as so many of you are already doing.

And pray that God will continue to move more of our young people – and maybe some who are already older – to consider serving as messengers of the gospel in a public way as pastors or teachers or on ministry staffs, with the confidence that God has all the power in the world to provide churches and schools and mission settings in this country and in places that that we maybe can't even imagine for those pastors and teachers to do their work of saying, “The doctor is coming. The doctor is someday coming to take everybody to live with him who puts their trust in what he did the first time he came to earth.” Dear friends, all of us are needed as messengers who can talk and pray and do all kinds of other things to let people know that Jesus has healed my soul – and he's healed yours, too.

And chief among the things we pray for is the other point I'd like to make for a few moments. The message which Jesus sent those disciples to share – and which he sends us to share – is not only a message for which messengers are needed, but it's also **a message that is filled with God's power.** Jesus pulls no punches. He doesn't sweet-talk people into the Christian faith and the Christian life. Right after telling us to pray that God would provide more and more workers for the harvest field, Jesus says in verse 3, **“Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.”** That doesn't sound like a very positive recruitment pitch, does it? “You're going to be in danger of being ‘gobbled up’”.

But Jesus did presents it like the assumed fact that it is, and he then goes on to tell them that they need to be focused solely on their mission – that's what he means about not greeting anyone on the road in verse 4. And he also tells them not to worry about how their physical needs will be taken care of. Those who believe their message, Jesus assures them, will take of what they need for their housing and their daily necessities, something that God's people continue to do until this day, something for which we as your called workers are very thankful.

That thought of going out like lambs among wolves, however, is one that can be kind of frustrating, and, in fact, even scary. There just is something about the message of needing a Savior from sin that leads many people who don't believe they need a Savior to make life rough for those who do. It is possible that you may not have had many experiences in your life where things have been made rough for you because of your Christian faith, but I know there are many of you who have – and any of us who have had those experiences know that that hurts. It hurts, for one reason, because the devil is right there trying to get us feel sorry for ourselves for getting mocked or looked down on or treated differently simply because we know we need the doctoral help which only Jesus can give.

But another reason it hurts is totally different. And this reason is the reason that gets to the heart of why we're still on earth and not yet in heaven. It hurts because it makes us feel so sad that someone else does not know the joy of Jesus. It hurts because they don't know how sick they are. It hurts because they sometimes totally misunderstand everything about us, thinking that we think we are better than they, when in reality we know we are the worst of all, and that that is why we needed the best of all – the holy substitute called the Christ. All we can do is simply go about our lives as God's children – sharing what he has done for us with one another, with our children – and hasn't it been wonderful to be part of all the recent baptisms of little babies for whom we have promised our congregational assistance to these parents – yes, sharing with one another and with our children and with others we know, who may give us the chance to invite them to church or to get in a conversation about our sins and God's grace, as well as with others we don't yet know at this time, whom God maybe has planned for us to meet some day so that we can have the chance to help them get to heaven.

The doctor is coming, everybody. Thank God that we know what he did when he was here the first time. Let's pray God that more and more people get a chance to know that, too – and that many of them get to know that right here among us! Amen