

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

Second Sunday after Pentecost - Year A

14th Sunday of Quarantine

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Exodus 19:2-8a

Psalm 100

Romans 5:1-8

Matthew 9:35-10:8 [9-23]

### **Gospel**

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew:

35Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. 36When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; 38therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." 10:1Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. 2These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew;

James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; <sup>3</sup>Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; <sup>4</sup>Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him. <sup>5</sup>These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, <sup>6</sup>but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. <sup>7</sup>As you go, proclaim the good news, ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ <sup>8</sup>Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment. [<sup>9</sup>Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, <sup>10</sup>no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for laborers deserve their food. <sup>11</sup>Whatever town or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave. <sup>12</sup>As you enter the house, greet it. <sup>13</sup>If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. <sup>14</sup>If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town. <sup>15</sup>Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town. <sup>16</sup>“See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. <sup>17</sup>Beware of them, for they will hand you over to councils and flog you in their synagogues; <sup>18</sup>and you will be dragged

before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them and the Gentiles. 19When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you at that time; 20for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. 21Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; 22and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. 23When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next; for truly I tell you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.”]

The Gospel of our Lord.

### **Prayer**

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

### **So Much To Do!**

Good morning! I love my wife, but sometimes she's insane. For example, just the other day she said the strangest thing: “do you really NEED to wash the truck before we leave for vacation?!” YES! What am I? Some barbarian who travels in filth?! But it got me thinking, before we leave for vacation I certainly try to get a lot done. Whenever we go on a trip

I HAVE to get whatever vehicle we're taking clean. For a normal person this means giving the car a quick wash and vacuum, but for me this meant spending two hours on Thursday cleaning the inside, and then most of Friday afternoon washing, claying, polishing, and waxing the outside. On top of that I had a laundry list of other things to do too! I needed to go through my emails and make sure I wasn't forgetting anything before I left, I needed to re-record my sermon from last week since I forgot to turn the microphone on last Sunday on the second camera. Then I needed to lead our Friday devotions, get stuff ready for worship from here at the beach, finish my sermon for today (which as you can guess from the fact that this intro is taking place AFTER the fact didn't actually happen,) I needed to drop Ned off with Lisa Ryan, oh! And I still needed to pack! Amidst all of this I also decided to trim my beard, which turned into me cleaning the bathroom, which turned into me thinking I should just clean the whole house while I was at it! It's clear I had given myself a lot to do.

In the church we often lament how much we have to do. "*The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few*" we say. Or we'll quote this piece of scripture when it seems like the job is impossible. I've been known to have a pessimistic streak, and I include myself in this group, using Matthew 9:37 as a lament. But we've been looking at this verse all wrong! Instead of

focusing on the negative, that the laborers are few, we have completely forgotten the good news that the harvest is plentiful!

But what do we do? Where do we start? Well, listen to the words from Colin Yuckman from Duke Divinity School: *“The language is striking because it is a near mirror image of the words used to describe Jesus' own practice in 9:35: ‘Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching ... and proclaiming ... and curing every disease and every sickness.’ At this moment the narrator introduces the twelve by name. In other words, the list of names does not stand alone as a mere registry of the twelve but as an introduction to an apostleship ‘charter.’ In this way we recognize that part of Jesus' own mission is to train followers to join the purposes for which his Father sent him. And the apostles' very identity is born in the midst of this movement from Father to Son to world. If, at this moment, we remembered Jesus' words in John, “as the father sent me, so I send you” (20:21), we would not be far afield.”*

And if you need more convincing that this is work that you have been invited and called into, listen to my man, Douglas R. A. Hare: *“The statement of verse 36 about Jesus’ compassion seems to have been taken from Mark 6:34, but the compassion is here actualized not in Jesus’ own activity but in the suggestion that others must become involved... Up to*

*this point Jesus has been the sole missionary. In the next chapter [chapter 10] he makes his disciples partners in the work of preaching the gospel and healing... In placing the saying here, Matthew is concerned primarily not for its narrative context but for its significance for his readers. They—and we—are challenged to pray that the work delegated by Jesus to his followers may involve more and more of those who acknowledge him as Lord.”*

God has invited us into this marvelous work! And while the harvest is plentiful, approaching a large job can often feel like we don't know where to even start. Fortunately, Jesus knows this. He limits the focus of this ministry to our home turf. Start small, go to the towns and areas that you're already familiar with. Spread the good news, and if it seems like you're getting nowhere, don't beat yourself up, move on and find fertile ground.

Joseph Kruckow, a former member who moved back to Pennsylvania, used to be so frustrated by mission statements that were so broad that they lacked any focus. How do I love EVERYONE when it's impossible for me to even meet or interact with them? Joe was echoing the same focus that Jesus provides for our ministry here in the Gospel lesson.

Right now the world can seem overwhelming, the amount of what's wrong is impossible to overcome. But remember! The harvest is plentiful!

The world is ready and waiting for a message of hope. As partners in God's work we become the hands and feet of God working in this world to bring that message of hope to all! A message that promises life to its fullest. A message of a God who loved the world so much that God was even willing to die for us, rising three days later, bringing about a change that has changed the world forever. And the best part? WE get to be a part of this work too! Amen.