

Pentecost 5, 2008  
Good Hope Lutheran Church  
Matthew 9: 35 – 10: 23

Again this week I point you to the Gospel lesson I just read, from Matthew chapters 9 and 10—Jesus instructing His disciples, and then sending them out to do the work of the Kingdom of God.

The Lord be with you. And let us pray:

Lord Jesus we have gathered again today, to be instructed by your Word, before being sent back out once more to do the work of the Kingdom of God. Forgive us for how poorly we serve your Kingdom, forgive us for seeking always to serve ourselves instead. Take us and shape us; teach us and equip us; lead us and guide us in ways that are pleasing to you, and a blessing to others, till the day you return for us at last; Jesus in your name we pray, AMEN.

Let me attempt to summarize today's Gospel lesson in a single solitary sentence. It would go something like this, "Jesus calls for total trust, and looks for total commitment, from 12 guys whom we know to be total failures." Again, Jesus calls for total trust and total commitment from 12 guys who turn out to be total failures—and yet in the end they don't fail. Because He won't let them. His love is enough, His grace is sufficient, and He promises to lead them home.

Jesus calls for total trust, look for instance at verses 9 and 10. Don't worry about how much gold you have, don't worry about your silver. Your 401K is taking a beating, I know, and you owe more on your house than it happens to be worth, but don't let that be a source of depression to you. One tunic is enough, one pair of shoes will do, don't worry what's in your closet or how fashionable you happen to look. Don't fret about your walking staff, don't fret about your car, or how much it now costs to gas up your car—you will have what you need to live, and maybe that's it. Maybe that's all. But you'll have me, Jesus says. Do you trust me, even in a bear market? Do you trust me, even in a recession? Do you trust me, even when it finally becomes obvious to you that you cannot control everything that happens in your life. Do you trust me, and will that be enough for you.

And, Jesus asks, are you committed to me. Up a few lines, in say verse 6 and following—will you seek out the lost and go to them? Will you get over being embarrassed about your faith and get over being reluctant to share the Good News with others, will you actually go where I lead

you and do what I tell you and say what I give you to say? Will you proclaim Good News? Will you pray with someone. People out there are overwhelmed, they have all the problems you do and then some but they don't know me! says Jesus. So, can you go tell them? Can you go show them, with me leading you Jesus asks can you make it clear that in the midst of this sorry world, the Kingdom of heaven has in fact drawn near? People are sick, people are dying, people are treated like lepers and left to suffer silently and alone, you have received everything that is good from me, Jesus says. Can you go and give what is good, and just not worry about it?

Total trust, total commitment. From 12 guys we know to be total failures. There's Simon, also known as Peter, also known to be the leader of the group, the first one mentioned every time. Also known to us as the one who crumbled in the garden of Gethsemane, the one who denied Jesus *three* times. There's Thomas, and Philip, who both struggled with doubt, even after the resurrection. There's James and his brother John who argued which one was the greatest, and the best, while neither one really listened to what Jesus was telling them. There's Judas, the betrayer. Total trust, total commitment? Total failures.

And though you might get the connection already, allow me to be plain—it's at this point we can add our names to that list. In chapter 10 starting at verse 2 the names of these total failures, these first 12 disciples, they are written down for us; and there's room for your name as well. You also have been called by Jesus Christ—baptized in His name, redeemed by His blood, taught by His Word, filled with His Spirit—put your name on the list. You're also a disciple. And as a disciple, you also have been called—to total trust, and total commitment—the work of the Kingdom of heaven is before you. And yet. Like the first 12 there in the text. The doubt the fear, the selfishness the greed, the sin. The failure.

But the promise. The Lord Jesus, who died and rose again—He died and rose again for you. His love is not there waiting to be given to be someone who will one day be worthy of it—His love is there for you, now. Today, tomorrow, and with the love, there is forgiveness for the past and release from all your old habits and regrets. There's the newness of this moment, His help and

His strength for whatever lies ahead. We fail, He comes through. We fall short, He fulfills, and exceeds. We worry about this world, He's overcome this world He's already got plans made for the next! We aren't enough and don't have enough, but He always does. And His love alone will see us through.

Nothing about those 12 or us is enough to give us hope for life in this world, let alone the life of the world to come. But Jesus, He's enough for both, and He promises always to be enough for you. May you come to trust that, and experience it, in the name of Jesus Christ, AMEN.