

The 3rd Sunday after Pentecost

“God’s message to proclaim –The Kingdom of Heaven is now here!”

(Matthew 10:7)

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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for this 3rd Sunday after Pentecost is from our Gospel reading, Matthew 10:7.

**“And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’”**

Here ends our text.

Jesus tells 12 of His disciples that He now commissions as His apostles to do this as they go – preach, proclaim the arrival of God’s Kingdom. Your turn! Preaching, proclaiming, the Gospel the Good News that the Kingdom of Heaven is now here by the coming of Jesus the Savior, is first and foremost what all Christians, all His disciples, are to do.

Jesus’ disciples had been watching and learning from Jesus. This is precisely what Jesus did as He went from city to city as the opening verse of our Gospel says.

**‘Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.’**

Jesus’ message of forgiveness, the Gospel, was accompanied by His miracles to show that He indeed had the power to forgive sins. We heard this last Sunday as Jesus forgave the paralytic first and then healed him.

Oh, this message, that the Kingdom of Heaven has come to sinful men in the person of Jesus Christ, that the gates of heaven were now open to sinful men who would repent and enter by faith, was an affront to the Pharisees. Oh, they despised that Jesus would call Matthew, the tax collector, to be one of His followers, as we heard last week. Oh, the shame that Jesus would eat with tax collectors and sinners at great feast that Matthew gave.

But, this is the Gospel as we heard last week. Jesus the Physician of body and soul has come to heal the souls of those who are sick with sin – not those who “think” they don’t need a doctor for their souls. Jesus did not come to call those who think they were righteous, but those who were repentant.

Before the Kingdom of heaven can be proclaimed, there needs to be a repentant heart. The soul needs to hear that Law that tells us that there is none that are righteous not one. Romans 3:10-12 tells us plainly.

**““There is none righteous, no, not one; 11 There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. 12 They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one.”**

But what is the Gospel message that the Great Physician Jesus proclaims to the broken soul? The beautiful words that follow in Romans 3:21-24.

**“21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,”**

“Apart from the Law”, separate from the Law, completely distinct from the Law is the preaching of the Kingdom of Heaven – the Gospel. For the Law cannot save. It can only show us how we have all fallen short of the glory of God. How we are all unprofitable – none who has done good, no not one.

And if we need more clarification on the Law, today’s epistle reading from Romans 5:12 tells us again:

**“12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—”**

The punishment for sin, which spread from Adam to all men, a sickness of all our souls is death – temporal and eternal.

Oh, the Pharisees did not want to admit their soul's sickness. Instead they hid behind legalist constructs of fastings and washing of hands, acts of self-righteousness. The disciples of John noticed that Jesus disciples did not follow these self-imposed obligations. Why? Jesus says that there is no mourning because the Bridegroom is present! He brings the Good News that through His work alone, one becomes righteous.

This is why Jesus then gives the illustration of the old and new wineskins. You can't patch up the old wineskin of self-righteousness with the Gospel. The wineskin will burst. There is no mix of one's supposed righteousness and the Gospel of Jesus righteousness. One needs a completely new skin! One has to despair of one's own righteousness and believe only in the righteousness of Christ for one's salvation.

Oh, how beautifully our epistle proclaims this.

**“15 But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.”**

Of course, when the Bible uses the word “many” here it is referring to all as verse 18 says clearly.

**“18 Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.”**

This proclamation of the Gospel is the Kingdom of Heaven that has arrived. This is the message that Jesus preached from city to city. Oh, He had compassion on the people for they had no true shepherds. The Pharisees had forsaken them with their legalism. There was no peace or comfort in the preaching of the Pharisaical law.

Then Jesus came and forgave sins. Wow! **“put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.” (Matthew 9:17)**

Compassion for the lost that they may be made new by the Gospel and preserved – that's what Jesus showed by His preaching. But He wants all people to hear this Good News and so He commissioned twelve of His disciples and sent them to do the same – preach that the Kingdom of Heaven is here. They were sent first to the

lost sheep of Israel. And to make sure that the people knew that their message was the same powerful message of forgiveness as Jesus spoke, He gave them power to heal and even raise the dead. Oh, they had freely received the great compassion of Jesus and believed the Good News of Salvation in Him. Now they were to freely give.

**“And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.”**

Have we not also freely received such great news of salvation, that the Kingdom of Heaven has been opened to you and me by the death and resurrection of Jesus? Indeed we have! And with the Word of the Gospel we also freely receive this day the very body and blood of Jesus with the wine of and bread. Jesus has compassion on each repentant sinner that comes to His table and declares His forgiveness. Eat and drink your sins are forgiven. And the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand for you this day!

As followers of Jesus, we live each day with the comfort of this reconciliation that Jesus has removed the wrath of God by His sacrifice for the sins of the world. As our epistle from Romans 5 tells us:

**“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.”**

And we receive Jesus’ very blood in this sacramental way at His table to still our souls and strengthen us. Oh, we have received freely, so also as His disciples we freely give.

How? First, Jesus shows us that we also are to have compassion on the lost. We are to see them as needing what we have received – healing of our souls. And then pray to the Lord of the Harvest, pray to the Father that He would save the lost in our time and place. Oh, that more would come to the Lord’s table with us is our prayer. Make a prayer for the lost your daily prayer. You have received freely so pray freely for others.

Pray for more laborers for the harvest. Pray that God would raise up more disciples who freely give of their time and efforts to reach the lost. Pray for yourself that God would give you opportunities, “as you go” to proclaim the Kingdom of Heaven to repentant souls.

Pray especially this day for fathers that they would be compassionate undershepherds to their families and share the Gospel daily with their families. Especially on this Father’s day we know that this is a most important duty of Christian fathers – to tell their family often as they go, day in and day out, in the very many ups and downs of the family life that there is always one constant refuge, one constant source of comfort for harried sinful sheep, Jesus the One who had compassion for all people and gave His life to justify all people! So, Psalm 78 says:

**“And our fathers have told us. 4 We will not hide them from their children, Telling to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, And His strength and His wonderful works that He has done.”**

Freely we all have received. Freely we are all called to give in compassion, prayer, and preaching and the support of those who laborer in the harvest.

“As we go” day in and day out, this is our joy, our privilege and honor to preach Christ crucified until that day comes when we rest from our labors. When that day comes and we sleep in the Lord’s loving arms as our sister Jeanette and brother Lee Roy are now sleeping, then the Kingdom of Heaven which we even now live in and rejoice in will be fully realized. The perfect joys of heaven will be freely given by the grace of God through the merits alone of Jesus, the second Adam. He died and rose and now death has lost its sting. And Jesus shepherds His flock eternally in heaven. Amen.

**“The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)**