**3rd SUNDAY after PENTECOST SERMON**

Our Gospel reading for this 3rd Sunday after Pentecost is from Chapter ten of Matthew WHERE Jesus talks seriously about the cost of following him.

Prior to chapter 10, that is, from chapters 4 to 9, Jesus simply called his first disciples: "Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Then Jesus took them through a training period. They sat at his feet. They learned from him. They watched him perform miracles. They went with him into the highways and the byways, and they began to understand what this ministry that Jesus came to do was all about. And it had been a time where they could ask questions and he would answer.

But beginning in chapter 10, (which was the Gospel reading last Sunday) Matthew presents a significant change in the discipleship process. The disciples move from being those who sit with Jesus and learn from Jesus to now being sent forth into the world. **FROM DISCIPLES TO APOSTLES.**  Jesus sends them out to cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons, to be about the work of ministry. And Jesus tells them, Now it is serious work. And as you go out, I need you to understand what this ministry is all about and the radical commitment it requires.

What happens next is related in this Sunday’s Gospel reading. Here Jesus details the demands of Apostleship: in other words what happens when we move from being evangelized to becoming evangelizers, from recipients of the Good News to proclaimers of the Good News.

Jesus tells the disciples what happens when they are sent out. Jesus says that he is sending them out like sheep into the midst of wolves. And just as they are sent to proclaim the same words as Jesus proclaimed and do the same things Jesus has done (10:7-8), so they should also expect to face the same persecution as Jesus did: They will be flogged and arrested. They will be betrayed by family members. They will be hated by all.

In this situation, Jesus tells them not to be afraid! For fear is and should not be the controlling force of their words and actions. Rather their trust in God should be the motivating force of their words and actions.

Why? Jesus gives one good reason: “*So do not be afraid of them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known.*

Above all, they should not be afraid because “*29Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. 30And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.”*

What a consoling message for us, especially during this time of the pandemic – and its consequences: sickness, death, physical and social sufferings, economic dislocation and many needs. What an appropriate reminder for us during this period of racial unrest and its consequences. It is good to remember that even a tiny sparrow is taken care of by the Lord. That we are of more worth that many sparrows. The Lord is in control of our lives. The Lord will see us through.

Yes, we should not be afraid to be proclaimers of the Good News in the midst of the corona virus pandemic, and of racial unrests – this is where we are sent today. Jesus is clear in his command: “*27What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs.”* By our words and actions, we proclaim the Good News – in our families, in our community and in our world. Amen.