

2nd Sunday after Pentecost
June 14, 2020

“The Compassionate Lord of the Harvest” (Matthew 9:36-39)
By Rev. Ed Weber

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father, the Lord of the Harvest, and our compassionate Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Our text for this 2nd Sunday after Pentecost is from our Gospel reading in Matthew 9:36-38.

36 But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. 37 Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. 38 Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.”
Here ends our text.

I. Sees the great distress of the lost sheep

Three weeks in a row now, the Gospel readings have focused our attention on what is the primary work of the church – evangelism. On Pentecost, Jesus’ disciples were given the gift to speak in other languages to proclaim the wonderful works of God. About 3000 repented and were baptized on that day. The Holy Spirit poured out His gifts on all flesh as the prophet Joel had prophesized...on sons and daughters, young and old, manservants and maidservants. All of God’s people are part of the mission team to share God’s word. Though the Holy Spirit hasn’t given us instantaneous fluency in other languages, He has given each of us the gifts to proclaim His praises in the language or languages that we have learned.

Then last Sunday we heard the Great Commission on Trinity Sunday. These were Jesus’ final commands before He ascended. He left His church with the primary work of making disciples, again, of all nations, through baptism, and then teaching them to make more disciples. Always, we are comforted by Jesus’ words that He is with us until the end of the age. Mission work is what Jesus wants His people to be doing, and He doesn’t send us alone, but goes with us for He wants all people to be saved. It’s God’s harvest. And that is where His eyes are focused...on saving the lost.

And lest we somehow relegate the Great Commission to the back burner, Jesus brings a 3rd evangelism text to our attention for the 3rd week in a row. The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few. Pray to the Lord of the Harvest for more workers to be sent into the harvest field. That's how important evangelism is to God. He wants all His people to be praying for it. And as we pray, each of us is moved by the Holy Spirit to participate in some way in the mission effort. Freely we have received, freely we give of our time, our talents and treasures, that other lost souls may be saved.

Jesus travelled to cities and villages as our text says in Matthew 9 Why? Because the harvest was plentiful. He taught them and preached the Gospel of the kingdom. He saw what the people were going through. They were harried and harassed. They were sick and weary. Have the times changed that much to what we are going through right now? Jesus healed them. We can depend on Him to help us through this pandemic because He doesn't change. He sees us and is moved with compassion. He has compassion on us! That's His nature. He's merciful and mighty as we sang last week in the hymn "Holy, Holy, Holy".

Jesus knows we are battling this Coronavirus disease that doesn't want to go away and has actually reached its highest infection rate here in the valley this very week. He knows we feel harried. He knows that we are stressed to constantly be taking precautions in all that we do. It humbles us more doesn't it? We are moved to always be trusting and reliant upon Jesus and His compassion at all times.

Jesus cares for all our needs, whether they are health needs or economic needs. He's moved by compassion to help us, just as He helped the people He saw in the cities and villages.

Most of all, Jesus is moved by compassion to take care of our greatest need – our soul's salvation!

II. Sends His Son to be their Shepherd of all the lost sheep

In our text, Jesus goes to the synagogues and teaches. He preaches the Gospel of the kingdom...that is the kingdom of grace. His greatest concern is healing people of their sin sickness with the forgiveness of the Gospel!

Our hymn of the day captures this thought beautifully in the first verse.

"Oh, how great is Your compassion, Faithful Father, God of grace,
That with all our fallen race, In our depth of degradation
You had mercy so that we, Might be saved eternally!"

The Father's compassion moved Him to send His own Son to bear the sins of all the fallen race. There is just one race in this world. There is no difference between blacks and whites and every other color and nationality. We're all fallen – deeply fallen in degradation. We are the sole cause of our misery. We have bigger problems than whether we are being racially profiled in this world. We are profiled as sinners...lost sinners...in the greatest need of God's compassion for we cannot change who we are. And we are lost eternally if it had not been that "You had mercy so that we might be saved eternally"

The solution? We hear that in the second stanza...

"Your great love for this has striven That we may, from sin made free, Live with You eternally. Your dear Son Himself has given and extends His gracious call, To His supper leads us all."

Jesus, God's dear Son was given! That was the supreme act of compassion for His fallen creation. Out of love He strove, He suffered, He died, He rose again that we may from sin be made free!

That is true freedom! Gospel freedom for the entire human race! Not only did Jesus prepare the banquet supper and proclaim all is ready, He "extends His gracious call". He wants His banquet hall to be filled. Jesus Himself teaches. Jesus Himself preaches that the Kingdom is near. Jesus is here in the flesh. God is with us to save us. Believe in Jesus and you will be saved!

Yes, we have compassion on people in this crisis for their physical well-being. We thank God for sending us 20,000 lbs. of frozen chicken this week from the Orphan Grain Train to share with the people who are harried and hurting in Mercedes. Oh, the stories I heard this week from other volunteers who participated in the distribution in Los Fresnos and Port Isabel. It was a team effort to reach out to as many people as possible. There were tears of joy from families who said that they didn't have any food and this came at the time they needed help the most. God sees our needs and is always moved with compassion.

And, we began our distribution here in Mercedes in prayer, to the Lord of the Harvest. We thanked Him for this great blessing of food. And most of all we thanked Him for giving us Jesus to be our Savior and take away our spiritual hunger by forgiving our sin. We shared Gospel tracts and booklets with the families who came.

Some will say that there is no good that can come from this pandemic. Yet, eternal good can come when lost sinners are awakened to repentance by their fears of sickness, loss of

income and even death. Eternal good can come only through our Triune God who brings healing and salvation. So we sang in stanza three of the hymn of the day...

“Firmly to our soul’s salvation Witnesses Your Spirit, Lord, In Your Sacraments and Word. There He sends true consolation, Giving us the gift of faith That we fear not hell nor death.”

The Spirit gives consolation and removes all fear! And the next stanza reinforces this confidence that we have in Christ!

“Lord, Your mercy will not leave me; Ever will Your truth abide. Then in You I will confide. Since Your Word cannot deceive me, My salvation is to me Safe and sure eternally.”

Yes, we have been freely given! Now, friends in Christ, freely give!

III. Sends more workers for the harvest is plentiful

Jesus asks His church to pray to His Father, the Lord of the Harvest to send more workers into His harvest. Give to God your prayers for the lost! Jesus targeted the lost sheep of Israel in this special mission trip by the apostles in today’s Gospel. They were to go to them first! That’s been done! Now, Jesus mission is to all people Jews and Gentiles!

As we distributed the chicken on Tuesday, we couldn’t help but realize at how meager our efforts were in the face of such great needs. We started at 9am and by 11am we had distributed 6000 of the 20,000 lbs that were loaded for Mercedes. We could have given much more.

The harvest is plentiful and the laborers are few. Those who received chicken received God’s word also. How many more people need to hear God’s word? We see so much strife and tension in this world and people hurting others, looting others, destroying property of others. The harvest is plentiful. Loot won’t give peace to a troubled heart but the Bread of Life will. Pray that God would send workers to the Harvest!

Be willing to say “Here I am Lord, send me also” as You see fit to use the gifts and talents that You have graciously bestowed on me. Send me to pray, to support, to proclaim, to show compassion, to lead people to the saving waters of baptism. Send me to teach others Your saving Word as I have been freely given, that I may give it to others! In what other ways can you show God’s compassion to others each day?

It doesn't matter what the circumstances are that this world is going through, whether it be a pandemic or not, a riot or not, one thing never changes. The world needs to know and receive the compassion of Jesus in their lives. All people need to hear the Gospel for their eternal salvation. This is God's primary mission to save the lost. As His church, it's ours too. Our compassionate Lord leads you and goes with you. What great compassion He has shown you and me that He would call us to be a part of His greatest of missions – to save the lost sheep...that they may know His mercy and be saved eternally! Amen.

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