

“The Lord of the Harvest”
Matthew 9:38 Pent2A17 6-18-17

When a preacher is pondering a sermon’s purpose and gets a similar message from three different sources it’s probably a good idea to pay attention. First, while mowing my yard Friday I listened to a teacher at a Lutheran High School talk about the need to prepare our young people for college. He cited frequent letters from college freshmen that always began, “you’ll never believe what the college professor said in class today”. And it was always something that contradicted what he taught from the Bible.

Then Lutheran Hour ministries sent me a link to their new blog, called THRED. In an article titled “Lies we tell our kids” there was a list of several things young people need to know. Most were about growing up in an adult world. It ended with this: To know what you were put on this Earth to be and do.

And the third message is our text. Jesus teaches and equips disciples about the faith and the world’s reaction to it. He sends apostles to pass that faith on to others. He teaches Christians of all generations what they were placed on this earth to do.

What we are to do as a church is be apostolic. Now you may have heard current televangelists use the title “apostle”. Sounds impressive, but the word just means one who is sent. The 12 whom Jesus taught were called disciples while they were learning. When he sent them they were called apostles. The last words you will sing this morning are, “here am I send me, send me.” In other words, Lord, make me an apostle. Every Sunday morning you come here to be disciples, and you study God’s word at home as disciples. Then when you go on about your day you are apostles, as you will be when you leave here.

As you go out as apostles you don’t go just with the knowledge of the Gospel message. You certainly should have that well in your heart and head. You also go with God’s authority and power.

Jesus sent his apostles with power to heal the sick, cast out demons, and raise the dead. The miracles were not the Gospel, but a sign to validate the Gospel. The message was that the kingdom of God had arrived in Jesus Christ. It was time to repent and receive the forgiveness of God promised through the expected Messiah.

Now you might wish we could duplicate those miracles and really help people. Everyone would believe us. Right? Wrong. As you well know, we all have this remarkable ability to deny truth that is right before our eyes. The power of miracles is limited.

But besides that, we go out as apostles with a miracle that is an even greater sign to validate the Gospel. Jesus died and rose from the dead by the power of God. When the apostles went out in our text He had not yet done that. After they went out the miracles still continued for a time, especially before the Scriptures were assembled and given to the Church. They continue somewhat today at God’s discretion.

However, miracles can be duplicated even by evil spirits, and faked by false prophets. So we need signs we know are from God. We have them in Good Friday and Easter. They are both miracle and message. They proclaim mercy and reconciliation with God. They were the only signs that Jesus himself would offer those who insisted that he prove He was who he said He was. This is the only sign we are obliged to give.

Jesus not only gives us authority, but also warns us of the world’s rejection of His Word. Our sermon hymn honors English Catholic martyrs persecuted since Henry the VIII in the 1500’s. It has been adapted for use by Protestants. Ironically, we can sing it in honor of the many Protestants persecuted by the Catholic Church during the Reformation. It calls all apostles to be faithful witnesses of the Gospel even unto death. That is relevant, since today more Christians are killed daily for their faith than at any other time in history.

Jesus says not to compromise His message hoping that people will love Jesus or His Church if we do. Some will reject His Words, no matter how we present them. If they do, move on. The harvest is too plentiful and the workers are too few to spend too much time on those who will not listen.

As our Father sent Jesus to save the world so Jesus sends us. As Jesus won many to salvation, so will the church. As he also won many enemies, so will the church.

We know our purpose, sent as apostles to pass on the faith to our families, our nation, and the world, no matter the cost. Amen.