

Sermon on Matthew 9:35-10:8 St. Paul's 7.1-3.17 Pentecost 4
"God Gives You!"

³⁵ Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. ³⁸ Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." 1- Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness. ² These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; ³ Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; ⁴ Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. ⁵ These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. ⁶ Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. ⁷ As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' ⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.

I walked into the clinic a month ago. I wasn't sure if I had strep throat or not. I wondered, should I even go in to the doctor at all. Is it worth the cost? Will I just get better on my own? If you call ahead, often times you're looking at a week or more wait to see your primary provider. If you go walk-in clinic at least someone will get to see you that day. While I am thankful for the N.U.M.C., this is for earthly doctors and nurses who at best will prescribe something that *might* help you. What if Jesus were still physically here, wouldn't the world just try to turn him into a sought after doctor? Throngs of people would press in to get to Jesus. It was already happening when Jesus walked this earth in his humiliation. But what was his purpose with these miracles? He *proclaimed the good news of the kingdom* – a Savior from sin. Jesus healed every disease and raised the dead. These miracles Jesus did and later that the disciples would do were signs to confirm the greater message of a Savior from sin. What about today? Jesus still wants to reach the world with the good news of salvation. What does he give to accomplish this? God gives you!

God gives you!

1) Jesus' Compassion inspires your Compassion.

2) Jesus invites you to ask him.

3) Jesus gets us to Go.

"When he (Jesus) saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." When you turn on the TV, open the newspaper and it shows victims of some tragedy, people stranded because of a hurricane, or the people left picking up the pieces of their lives after an attack, or a friend tells you about some hardship in their life or great need, and you feel that drop in your stomach – and you want to help them and you are even moved to help financially, with a word of encouragement or with your time – this is the compassion that Jesus felt for these people. It wasn't just the dregs of society Jesus was helping either. In these crowds were the rich and poor, the

educated and uneducated, Jews and even Gentiles, even Roman soldiers. Everybody has problems, some of these things are earthly consequences of our sin or someone else's, or they're simply the results of living in a sinful world. Some of us are better at not letting our crazy show. But all of us struggle. But if someone can help us – show us! Jesus the one who can and does heal has compassion on us.

Could you imagine sheep without a shepherd? These are not powerful big-horn sheep on the sides of Coloradoan cliffs. The sheep Jesus speaks of here are the white, fluffy, skittish and senseless kind that need constant guidance to see where to eat, what water is safe to drink and protection from wolves and predators. Without Jesus, that is what we are spiritually. That is what many in our town are on the inside whether they want to admit it or not. Is there a God? Does he hate me or love me? Who do you trust? What is a good course of action? What is going to happen to me after I die? Can I ever be forgiven? What's wrong with me, with the world? Which religion or church can I trust? Can I really achieve my dreams? Can I expect anything good out of this life save what I can grab and take for myself? And the wolves harass, and the path is dark.

If you are sitting here and you know that Jesus is your Good Shepherd, thank God. Thank God for the forgiveness of sins which your shepherd won for you when he laid down his life on the cross to pay in full the penalty of your sin. Thank God for the confidence that neither death nor life, depth nor height can separate you from your Shepherd's hold or his love. Thank God that your Shepherd makes all things work together for good to them that love God. Thank God that your Shepherd doesn't just set you free from Satan's hold or temptation's control, but that he daily leads you and guides you by his Word and his promises, and on the greatest day of your life, he will lead you home to eternal rest in heaven. Jesus is your Good Shepherd and you are his sheep. Now what about those who don't know? Is there something, anything we can do, to help the masses who don't know their Savior, who don't have certainty of forgiveness and life? **Jesus' compassion for you, his sheep, inspires that same compassion in us. He invites us to ask Him.**

*"Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." Duh. Right. First of all, he tells us it's his harvest. He created this world. He's saved it. Jesus sent his Holy Spirit into our hearts which helps us look at God and say, "Abba, Father." So ask your Abba. **He invites us to ask Him.***

It's not a matter of not knowing God can help us or not. Jesus invites us to pray and has shown us the power of God to help and save. The problem is with us believing God wants to help us, sinners, and that God can and will help us. Stop doubting and believe. My kids sometimes stop asking me when I tell them firmly "No." But often they keep asking me anyways? Why do they do that? They know I love them. And they really want whatever it is they keep asking me about.

But what about when I have promised them something, or I've told them, "Ask me later?" They keep asking and keep asking. "Later" for Hattie, my five year old, is about thirty seconds, if that, just enough time to get refocused on what I was doing so she can interrupt again. For destructiGus, our three year old, he waits about three breaths. They ask me to do

whatever it is I've promised. Now I am a feeble, fickle, not all knowing, often limited in time and resources, earthly father. But if the eternal, almighty, unchanging, omniscient God who loves us perfectly tells me to ask him - Ask! God loves you. He's almighty and his gifts are always and only good. He always hears you and always helps you. You know God loves you, and you really want more people to know Jesus. Ask.

But in praying this, what if I get the feeling that God wants to not just use my resources or money, what if Jesus also wants to use me to reach others? I don't know if that's in my comfort zone. (Family Reunion story if time – Jesse and the Jeep/Minivan). The disciples may have had the same thoughts. Fishermen like James and John, Peter and Andrew – who spent a lot of time out on the lake being very quiet except when they said, “Here fishy, fishy, fishy, fishy” might have been averse to speaking to strangers or in public. Just a hunch. Or how about a known tax collector named Matthew, a sell out to the Roman government in many a Jew's eye – and you place him with a nationalist and zealot named Simon who spent much of his life plotting against the Roman government. What about a respected Judean named Judas who might lose his reputation for backing a rabbi like Jesus! Do you think they had their doubts and reservations about going? Do you think they didn't want to leave their comfort zones? Every time Jesus told them he was going to suffer, die and be gone from their sight, and then rise, the disciples got either angry, worried, or sad and sometimes all three emotions spilled out. They left everything to follow him. **Jesus gets us to go**, even out of our comfort zones. And “the why” is most important.

“As you go, proclaim this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.”

The greatest thing Jesus gives us is the message that saves our hearts and souls both now and in eternity. His kingdom has come near. God has fulfilled his promises to this world and to us. We have a Savior from sin, a God who loves us, and a Spirit who gives guidance in the Word and the wisdom and strength to apply it in our lives. *“The kingdom of heaven has come near.”* We have the good news that heals the soul! We have the good news that saves! With his message, his Spirit, his encouragement, **Jesus gets us to Go** in our conversations with our co-workers – reminding them that God loves them, with our relatives – encouraging them that Jesus has a plan for them, with our neighbors – getting to know them enough to ask the question about church or if they know Jesus yet. And with all to pray, pray that God use us, but also to pray for more workers in the harvest fields.

After preaching today, I don't know how many of you are ready to sign up for service as a Pastor, Teacher or Staff Minister in our synod churches and schools. My prayer is that many of you consider this calling and verbally encourage others to as well. And I ask all of you, as Jesus does, to pray for more workers in the harvest field, and to support the sending of workers. I do know this about you, though, that all of you have been called and equipped by your God to serve the people God has placed in your way in your life: families, friends and acquaintances - to lead them and encourage them to the one who is their Good Shepherd and their Savior from sin, our Lord, Jesus Christ.

God has given you, not because we deserve it or we're the best. He's freely given all to us and us to all because of his love. And he equips us to freely give. *"Freely you have received; freely give."* **God gives you. Jesus' compassion inspires your compassion.** His unchanging love for you enables you to love others. **Jesus invites you to ask him.** He has made promises and invites you to hold him to them. He hears and He answers. **Jesus gets you to go.** He has equipped you and he goes with you always that the world might know his love for them. **God gives you** and that's good! Amen.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, we praise you for working faith in human hearts, especially in my heart. You instruct us by the Word. You strengthen us by the Word. You embolden us to live to God's glory and to speak of the God's love to others. Forgive us for the times we have failed to speak of Jesus' love to others because we were afraid. Help us to remember your promises that when we share the Savior with others, you will be with us and will give us the words to say. Empower us to seize every opportunity to share the gospel of Jesus' love with others. Grant open hearts and many more believers. We ask this in the name of Jesus, Amen.