

Sermon: 7th Sunday after Pentecost

Text: Luke 10:1-20: Jesus sends out the seventy-two

Theme: Challenges in God's Mission

Goal: God sends and equips His messengers for His Mission

Dear Friends,

Introduction: The mission of the church is in essence God's Mission. He chooses, He equips, He sends, He blesses those who preach the Gospel of His kingdom. The mission work doesn't depend on human efforts only. Of course we have to share and preach the Gospel. But we need to be aware that God is in command of His Kingdom and He does the best for the growth of His Kingdom through His Church.

Jesus taught us to pray in the Lord's Prayer: "Thy Kingdom Come". And Martin Luther explains: *What does this mean? The Kingdom of God certainly comes by itself without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may come to us also. - How does God's Kingdom come? God's Kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His Holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity* (Small Catechism).

Our text is a vivid example how God works to call people to faith and to enlarge His Kingdom. It shows the challenges in God's Mission and how we are called to be God's partners and co-workers in His Mission to save humankind. The principles of this mission efforts of Jesus reported in our text are still valid to us and to our church in this 21st Century. I will highlight some of the main verbs in this text because they lead to actions!

I – Appointed and sent

Jesus had chosen and sent the twelve disciples in a similar mission previously, as we read in chapter 9 of Luke. Now He *APPOINTED* seventy-two of His followers “and SENT them two by two ahead of Him to every town and place where He was about to go”.

No one can be a missionary or a pastor if the Lord doesn't choose him and doesn't send him. The tasks Jesus was performing as a messenger of God were delegated to His church. If someone feels that God is calling him to the Holy Ministry, he must have the recommendation of his church, which acts in the name of Jesus and supports the candidate as he prepares himself to be a preacher. After the candidate is ready (or even for an internship, as was the case in our text), the church calls and sends the candidate. No one should go by himself, without a regular call, because this is not a human or personal matter, but this is God's matter and a corporative matter of the church.

This has to be distinguished from the personal and spontaneous witness that each Christian does in words and in deeds. The text is talking about people who are officially sent to preach the Kingdom of God publicly.

II – Ask

Then Jesus said: “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. ASK to the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field.” – This is one of the most well-known mission prayers. Seventy-two seems to be a good number of missionaries; but they were not enough. The church always suffers a lack of ministers. Millions of people around the world never had a chance to hear God's Word. We cannot think only about our comfortable situation: we have a building where we gathered to worship, we have a pastor. We have to have concern about those who don't have

someone to preach and to teach them, and therefore we pray for God's Mission around the world and for more ministers. Maybe God has plans to call one of our youth to His team of workers! We have to pray for labourers for God's Kingdom.

III – Go

Now we have the big challenge: “GO! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.” We always talk about Matthew 28:19, when the resurrected Jesus sent His disciples: “GO and make disciples of all nations...” In this text Jesus sends and warns: The task is not easy. The disciples were sent like lambs among wolves. People are not always receptive to the Gospel and to God's messengers. The church suffered and still suffers lot of persecution. And if we don't suffer physical persecution, the scorn and contempt hurts as well. But even so, let's GO!

IV – Say

The message to be shared is very clear: “When you enter a house, first SAY: Peace to this house.” God's messengers are messenger of peace. God sent His Son Jesus to reconcile humankind to God. Jesus came to save, not to condemn. This is the main message of the Christian Church: To preach peace and reconciliation through the blood of Jesus shed on the cross. Sins are forgiven to all who believe in Jesus. The Church warns and preaches the Law because those who don't believe are still condemned and they have to be called to repentance and faith. Jesus is very clear when He talks about His mission on earth: “For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son” (John 3:17-18).

V – Stay

The next verb I will highlight is “stay”: “STAY in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages.” – The missionary and pastor shall identify himself with his people, living as they live. And the people have to receive and sustain the messenger of God. - This was the case of the Apostle Paul and many other, who were traveling from town to town to preach the Gospel, being hosted in several houses. After the Christian Church was better established, the Holy Ministry was better organized as well with fulltime pastors sustained by the Church.

VI – Heal and tell

Then Jesus said: “HEAL the sick who are there and TELL them, ‘The Kingdom of God is near you.’” – Healing was an important part of the early ministry as a sign of God’s power toward the needy people. And the message of the Kingdom of God was to announce Jesus Himself, who was coming to visit them as well. – We pray for our sick people and believe that God hears our prayers and attends according to His good will. And the Kingdom of God is among us as Jesus comes in His Word and in His Sacrament of His Holy Body and Blood.

Conclusion: God is still in mission through His Church, through His pastors and missionaries, through His Christians as well. Each of us in the place God puts us is a light to shine the love and kindness of our God revealed in Jesus Christ in our personal life. The goal of our witness, officially as Church and spontaneous as Christians, is to share God’s peace through faith in Jesus and to call more people from darkness to His glorious Kingdom of peace. Much missionary work is still to be done among us and around the world. In spite of difficulties, opposition and persecution, God is in mission to save many more. To Him be the glory! Amen. (Pastor CWWinterle – C.Town, 07 July 2013)