

June 14, 2020, Pentecost 2

Parts of this service marked with an asterisk () may be led by one person.*

Invocation

* We worship as we live,
in the name of the Father, the Son (†), and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Confession

Loving, compassionate God,
we come to you, admitting our need, admitting our lack, admitting our brokenness.
We have neglected our responsibilities to you, to our neighbour, to your creation,
and even to ourselves.

Forgive us. Remind us of your love.
Show us a new way, that we may trust your promise, live more fully, and follow more faithfully.
We pray in the name of Jesus the Christ, our Saviour.
Amen.

Hymn (Read or sing together)

(Hymn lyrics printed under OneLicence # 11411292)

We all are one in mission; we all are one in call,
our varied gifts united by Christ, the Lord of all.
A single great commission compels us from above
to plan and work together that all may know Christ's love.

We all are called to service, to witness in Christ's name.
Our ministries are different; our purpose is the same:
to touch the lives others with God's surprising grace,
so every folk and nation may feel god's warm embrace.

Now let us be united, and let our song be heard.
Now let us be a vessel for God's redeeming Word.
We all are one in mission; we all are one in call,
our varied gifts united by Christ, the Lord of all.

For those of you reading this on line, this hymn may be heard by clicking here -
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w0AmVKrX6xg>

Prayer of the Day (Prayer used by permission of Augsburg Fortress)

* God is with us. Let us pray.
God of compassion, you have the way for us and brought us to yourself. Pour your love into
our hearts, that, overflowing with joy, we may freely share the blessings of your realm and faithfully
proclaim the good news of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Gospel Reading

* The Holy Gospel according to Matthew

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest."

Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection

* The need was great. Almost overwhelming.

Jesus had come to love and serve and heal, to proclaim the reign of God, to demonstrate it, to live it out.

But the more he did, the more there was to do.

It had started small, but word had gotten out. Quickly! The crowds had grown, and had become substantial.

And yet, because Jesus was so determined to share this gift, he had stopped waiting for people to come to him. Now he was going to them, travelling around to cities and villages, synagogues and homes. Kind of a Grand Tour.

So, naturally, the crowds grew even more. And more. And more.

The need was great. Almost overwhelming.

But Jesus wasn't overwhelmed. He managed to avoid wanting to hide. He didn't complain about it suddenly being too much. He didn't lose himself in all the human hopelessness.

Because Jesus didn't just see the need. He saw the *cause* of the need. He understood the *reasons* for the desperation. He "*got*" that they were harassed, helpless, leaderless, directionless. He "*got*" that they were hopeless, and would grab ahold of literally anything or anyone who would provide relief, who would provide healing, who would provide some sense of peace.

Jesus saw the need. But Jesus also saw the cause.

And Jesus responded. To the need, *and* to the cause.

By bringing people in to help with the work.

But the way he did it is interesting, and revealing.

And instructive.

He didn't just say to the disciples, "Look, they need help, so go help them."

He said, "The need is great. The *cause* of the need is huge. Let's spend some time praying about these realities. Spend some time thinking about them. Spend some time being intentional about admitting the need, admitting the cause, admitting that you are part of this messed up situation, even admitting that you are part of the cause. Spend some time praying, so God can bring others on board, to address the need, to address the cause, to bring healing and health and hope, in partnership with these people who have none of these things."

The way Matthew tells this story, we have now reached the most interesting part.

Because he doesn't say that the disciples went away, and prayed, and studied, and read, and discussed, and conducted interviews, and read their Bibles, and read other materials put out by those

who were harassed and helpless, and once they had it all figured out, they finally came back to Jesus who sent them out.

That's not how Matthew tells this story. At all.

Instead, Matthew says, "**Then**."

Jesus pointed to the need, the great need, the overwhelming need. Jesus invited them to consider the *cause* of the need, and their role in discerning that cause.

And as soon as he had done that, "**Then**" he commissioned them, "**Then**" he empowered them, "**Then**" he sent them to do the exact same things he was doing.

Right then.

The need was too great to wait. The need was too overwhelming to pause, or to be put "on hold" while the disciples got their act together and figured it all out.

Jesus said, "Consider the need. Consider the cause. Consider your own role in this situation. Recognize that you have God-given gifts, you have divinely inspired abilities that are needed. Right now. Go."

The need was great. Almost overwhelming.

But Jesus wasn't overwhelmed. Instead, he increased the number of people who could address the need, even in the *middle* of it being overwhelming, even by people who were part of the situation, even by people who were part of the cause.

And you know where this is going. You've seen the headlines, and heard the stories. You know that the pain is real, that the division is real, that the racism is real.

You know that the need is here.

Even here. Not just in the United States. Not just in foreign places. Not just in big cities. And not just on the news. Here. In Canada. In Nova Scotia. In Lunenburg County. In our homes. In 2020.

It will not be easy. It will, in fact, be just about the hardest thing we've ever done. Remember, we're talking about centuries of pain, centuries of division, centuries of racism. And that's not going to go away overnight.

The need is great. And it's just as overwhelming as it ever was.

Jesus sees the need. Jesus also sees the cause.

And Jesus is responding today. To the need, **and** to the cause.

By bringing people in to join the work. More disciples. You and me.

And his instructions are the same. Pray. Reflect. Learn. Listen to the stories of those who are harassed and helpless.

But notice again. Just as he did before, Jesus is not waiting for us to figure it all out, or have all the answers. Or, in fact, have **any** answers.

Because he has commissioned you. Now. And empowered you. Now. And sent you to do the exact same things that Jesus is doing. Now. Loving. Serving. Healing. Proclaiming the reign of God. Demonstrating it. Living it out, in partnership with all the harassed and helpless people of the world.

Right now.

The need is too great to wait. The need is too overwhelming to pause, or to be put "on hold" while we get our act together and figure it all out.

Jesus says, "Consider the need. Consider the cause. Consider your own role in this situation. Recognize that you have God-given gifts. Recognize that you have divinely inspired abilities that are needed. Right now.

“Go.”

Amen.

Offerings

Please take a moment to support our parish with your financial gifts. Expenses continue, as you know, even in the middle of this pandemic shut-down. Your consistent support is crucial to maintaining the ministry of this parish.

You can do this several ways:

- *All of our churches will receive offerings via mail.*
- *You can make an on-line donation through the ELCIC website, secure.elcic.ca. Include the name of your congregation and its location in the “Personal Message” box.*
- *Zion in Lunenburg can receive on-line donations through www.canadahelps.org.*
- *Both Grace and Zion have installed a secure mail slot/box on the front of their buildings, in which your offering envelopes may be placed whenever convenient.*

Thank you for your on-going support in these challenging times.

Prayers of the People

* Responding to the promise that we will be heard, we offer our prayers to God.

[*Short pause*]

God who comes, God who sends, life seems to have become more divided and isolated than ever. It's overwhelming, and we feel so inadequate. We would prefer to hide. God who is with us,
Hear our prayer.

God who comes, God who sends, Jesus comes to us in our isolation and fear, and asks things of us which seem impossible. We are overwhelmed with the unknowns. We would prefer to stay where we are. God who is with us,

Hear our prayer.

God who comes, God who sends, Jesus asks us to pray, and then go. But all we can feel is our lack: lack of knowledge, lack of understanding, lack of answers. We would prefer to wait until we feel ready. God who is with us,

Hear our prayer.

God who comes, God who sends, you call us into your church, feed us with yourself, and send us to the world. We would prefer to stay in our buildings, and in our homes. Remind us that you go, too. God who is with us,

Hear our prayer.

God who comes, God who sends, people we know are sick. Our community is sick. Our world is sick. Sick with illness, sick with racism, sick with greed. You call us to share your healing work. Therefore, we remember before you all who are heavy on our hearts.

[Names of those who are of special concern may be offered.]

God who is with us,

Hear our prayer.

God who comes, God who sends, we recognize that the need is great. It feels overwhelming, and we

are afraid. Free us to go. Free us to love and serve. Free us to learn on the job. God who is with us,
Hear our prayer.

We pray this in the name of our risen and living Saviour, Jesus the Christ, who taught us to pray,
Our Father....

Lord's Prayer (*Prayer used by permission of Augsburg Fortress*)

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

OR

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

OR

To pray with the leaders of our local congregations, you may click here -
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5D7r99aSnzg>

Hymn (*Read or sung together*)

(*Hymn lyrics printed under OneLicence # 11411292*)

Rise up, O saints of God! From vain ambitions turn;
Christ rose triumphant that your hearts with nobler zeal might burn.

Speak out, O saints of God! Despair engulfs earth's frame;
as heirs of God's baptismal grace, the word of hope proclaim.

Rise up, O saints of God! The kingdom's task embrace;
redress sin's cruel consequence; give justice larger place.

Gave heed, O saints of God! Creation cries in pain;
stretch forth your hand of healing now, with love the weak sustain.

Commit your hearts to seek the paths which Christ has trod;
and, quickened by the Spirit's power, rise up, O saints of God!

For those of you reading this on line, a slightly modified version of this hymn may be heard by clicking here - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_IP3Pz1KTvI

Benediction (*Read together*)

May almighty God,
The Father who created us to live in love,
The Son (†) who died and rose to bring us new life,
And the Spirit who has already empowered us,
bless us all, now and forever. Amen.

Go in peace. Christ goes with you.

Thanks be to God!