

Rev. Shaun Arndt
Sunday, July 14, 2024
Mark 6:7-13

*May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples
praise you. Amen.*

Sent out by Jesus

Dear friends in Christ,

Jesus' close friends gather around. They are here only because of God's undeserved love. Indeed, Jesus once told them: **You did not choose me, but I chose you... (John 15:16).**

And so they trust He is the long promised Savior. They listen to His voice as He teaches them **the words of eternal life** (John 6:68). Through God's amazing grace, they will one day live and rule in Jesus' everlasting Kingdom!

Even more amazing is what Jesus does next. Though they are weak and fallible human beings with old sinful hearts within, yet they are **Sent out by Jesus** to bring His saving Word to the world!

If you think I'm describing **the Twelve** Apostles in our Gospel lesson, you would be *half* right. At the same time, I was also describing you—you—you—all of you!

You are Jesus' close friends. He says so in John 15! **No one has greater love than this: to lay down His life for His friends** (13). The Lord Himself chose you and called you as His own when the Holy Spirit created faith in your heart through the power of the Gospel.

Jesus has also taught you His saving words. After all, the Words of the Bible are the words of Jesus Himself.

This very day, Christ gathers us around Himself as He comes to us in the promises of the Bible – in the message of sins forgiven we heard in the absolution and throughout the liturgy. The opening words of the worship service: **In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit** recall how He adopted you as His own and has prepared a place for you in His everlasting Kingdom that will never perish, spoil or fade!

And then once again, Jesus does this amazing thing: even though we have a sinful nature and are full of weakness and flaws, Jesus **sends us out** to be His messengers and witnesses.

The Lord said exactly that to His Church, An Acts 1: **You will be my witnesses** (8).

He says it also at the end of the Gospel of Matthew: **Go and gather disciples from all nations by baptizing them... and by teaching them** (28:19-20).

And again, at the end of Mark: **Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation** (16:15)...

...and Luke: **repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached... to all nations... You are witnesses of these things** (Luke 24:47-48).

I don't think you need me to go on to quote John's gospel, the many Psalms and Prophets that call for us to make God's name known among the nations and to teach the generations, not to mention Moses in Deuteronomy and the letters of the New Testament!

The point is clear, isn't it? As a believer in Jesus, as part of His Church of all believers you, like **the Twelve** in our lesson, are **Sent out by Jesus**.

Now the Apostles were full time preachers and teachers of Jesus' Word, a bit like our pastors, teachers and other full time called workers. But even if you are not a called worker publically serving on behalf of the church, you are still **sent out by Jesus**.

After all, you are part of a congregation, whose mission is to use God's Word to ***cultivate and nurture faith to flourish in the Peace of Christ***. Through our offerings, prayers, supporting our called workers and serving in various ways together we work together to tell others about the good news of Jesus.

By working together in these ways, when an early childhood teacher sings *Jesus loves me* with the babies or one of the pastors points the dying believer to heavenly home Christ has prepared them, it is you work too that you are helping to make happen as you are **sent out by Jesus** through the work of our Ministries!

The same is true when with our offerings and prayers we support our Synod's work of teaching about Christ throughout the world in mission work and by training the next generation of pastors and teachers. By supporting those efforts we share in their work! What a privilege to be **sent out by Jesus** through the work of our Synod.

Yes we are **sent out by Jesus** as we work together with our church and church body to serve as Jesus' witnesses in the world. But there are also the very personal and individual ways Jesus sends you out as His witnesses.

A missionary to the Philippines or a WELS teacher in an inner city classroom may go to places to speak about Jesus where you and I will go. But at the same time, Jesus **sends you out** to places where missionaries, Lutheran teachers or pastors may never get to go...

Namely: Your neighborhood. Your coworkers. Your household. Your family. Your circle of friends. The people you meet day by day. These are all people that you get to witness Jesus to that your pastors might never be able to, or never could unless you talked to them first, unless you invite them.

And we know there are people who need to hear about Jesus! At least 3 out of every five, (and likely higher), but at least 3 out of 5 of the people in Sun Prairie are not connected to a church to hear the gospel. The latest research says that in our nation, about 20% of unchurched people have never even been exposed to the actual message of Jesus.

It is highly unlikely that a person like that is going to just walk through the doors of our building to hear about Jesus on their own. Especially since the statistics say many of those people don't have a high opinion of the Christian Church.

But interestingly, the statistics say those same people who don't have respect for the church as an institution, *do* have a high respect for the individual Christians they know. Another study shows the unchurched are three times more likely to accept an invitation to church from someone they know than from a social media ad.

Do you see what that means? You have been put in a very important place for this most important reason. You are **sent out by Jesus** to be His witnesses to people in your life!

Is it easy to be Jesus' witnesses? Will we always be successful? No. The Lord Himself was rejected. He told the Apostles to expect times when people would not **listen** to them. We can expect the same.

So how can we do this difficult, yet important work? Well, go back to the Bible truth we find in these words: **Jesus called the Twelve and began to send them out two by two. He gave them authority over the unclean spirits.**

First, remember, it is **Jesus** who **sends us out** just as He **sent out the Twelve**. And that makes all the difference right there! It is our Savior who loves us, who has all power and has promised to be by our side.

We may ask, but, “who am I to go talk to others about Jesus?” Or someone might ask us, “what gives you the right to talk to me about that?” The answer is **Jesus** does! Jesus gives you the right, for He **sends you out** with the authority of His Word – the Word of the Lord by which the world was made and by which the dead are raised!

Now, at the time Jesus walked the earth, the devil attacked with everything he had, including possessing people with demons, **unclean spirits**. Though we may not face demon possession, the devil is hard at work with lies and deceptions all around us. The Word Jesus gives us in the Bible still has **the authority** and power to rescue people out of the devil’s kingdom through the message of sins forgiven!

Since the work would be difficult, Jesus **sent** the disciples **out two by two**. That can remind us we need each other. We need to be together in worship and Bible study to encourage each other, pray for one another and to grow together in God’s Word so that we are well equipped to tell about Jesus.

But what shall we say? **They went out and preached that people should repent**. This is short hand for the message that Jesus himself preached earlier in Mark: **Repent and believe the good news** (Mark 1:15)

Repent: means to turn from sin, to recognize there is something wrong with us, and we cannot fix it.

Repent: also means to also turn with Spirit given faith to the **gospel**, the **good news** that Jesus has fixed what we cannot. He has paid for our sins and failings by His innocent death on the cross. Jesus rose triumphant from the dead to guarantee us eternal life free from the hurts and pains of this broken world.

Though God may not give us the ability to perform healing miracles like the Apostles, yet He has equipped us with the good news of Jesus’ saving work that will end all sickness and sorrow at the resurrection!

Repent and believe the good news about Jesus. This is not only the message we share, but it is also our reason and power. We can humbly speak this message to others because we know we need it too!

We don’t need to pretend to be perfect (including to our children), but can admit we too are sinners and we do not think we are better than others. Instead, we too daily **repent**, knowing we fail and fall short, including when it comes to being Jesus’ witnesses!

And then we can testify to what Jesus himself has given us. We can speak of what the goodness and love of God that is like nothing else in this world, this world – that the Lord does not turn us away or treat us our sins forgive, but that He gave His dearest treasure for us on the cross to pay for every sin. We can speak of our confidence that nothing, not even death can harm those who trust in Jesus, who rose to give us peace with God and life forever.

Dear fellow friends of Jesus, forgiven, saved, loved by Him and given a place in His kingdom, each day remember what He has done for you and how you are **Sent out by Jesus**. Amen.

The LORD's right hand has done mighty things! I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the LORD has done. Amen.

We confess our Christian faith using the Apostles Creed on page 181 — the creed is an excellent summary and outline of the message we witness about Jesus