

June 18, 2017

Jesus Gives a Mission, Not a Plan

PRAYER

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Heavenly Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. AMEN

SERMON

When we read the scriptures one thing is quite clear. When God acts in the lives of his people, they are put into motion. They're called to action. It's the spiritual equivalent of Newton's third law of motion. For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction.

We find the Hebrew people in camp at the foot of Mt. Sinai. And as they are there, God's word is spoken to them. "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians. You are to be a holy people, you are to be a priestly people." They are God's chosen people. They are called, they are sent. They are to be God's intermediaries. The go between between God and all the peoples of the Earth. We see that spiritual principle of motion at work again in today's Gospel. Jesus says share his teaching, his love for the disciples and now he sends them out into the world among the people to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom. Jesus is overwhelmed in his humanity as he sees all the people coming to him for healing and for other gifts of blessings that they need. They have so much need. He alone can't do it even though he's the son of God. It's more than any one person can do. And so, he gives authority to the disciples. And in giving them that authority, he gives them a mission to go to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom to cure the sick. To raise the dead, to heal the lame, to cast out demons. His love has been active in their lives and now they are set out to be the embodiment. To be the incarnation of his love in the world. And that love Jesus shared with his disciples, he shares with you and me today.

Saint Paul makes that clear in his letter to Romans, where he says God shows his love for us and that while we were still sinners Christ died for us. As that love impacts our lives, we are called to put our lives into motion responding to that action of God's grace. We are called to be the embodiment of God's love in the world today. To be that incarnation of Jesus' love so that the world comes to experience God's love.

Today we have a poignant example of how critical it is for people of faith. For you and for me to live out our discipleship. There is much evil afoot in our nation and in the world. We see it in acts of terrorism and violence. And in hate groups who propagate a message of hatred and intolerance for people with whom they disagree. Hate groups like the ones that demonstrated here at St. Jude's this morning.

It's a daunting task we are called to do to be the embodiment of Jesus' love in the world. It's a daunting task to confront evil especially when that evil is done in the name of God. Nonetheless, that's the task we are called to do. We are called to be and make disciples for

Christ. It's the mission Jesus gives to his disciples, to you and me, and to the church. The church is to be a place where people who come encounter the love of the risen and living Christ. And Jesus wants St. Jude's to be a church that empowers and equips its members to go forth in the world living that love. Being disciples and making disciples for Christ. That is our mission.

Now today is Father's Day and while what I am about to say is really aimed at fathers. It really speaks to all of us. You know as father's we spend a lot of money clothing our children. We buy clothes for school, clothes for various sports and activities. Uniforms for baseball or football, costumes for cheerleaders and dance classes. We buy all these clothes but are we providing the most important clothing of all, the robe of Christ as St. Paul ludes in his letter to Galatians. Where when he says, "When you were baptized into Christ you put on Christ." When we're baptized we dawn Christ as a robe of righteousness. That's why pastors wear these weird looking robes called albs. They symbolize that message. The white stands for the purity of Christ so that when God looks at our lives, sinners though we be. God sees not our sinfulness but Christ's righteousness.

Are we as parents making sure that our children wear that robe of righteousness every day? You know it's sharing our faith especially with our child is really quite simple. It's as simple as living the love of Jesus in our thoughts, in our words, and in our deeds. That's what fathers are called to do. That's what all of us are called to do. To go into the world living our discipleship. Living that love of Jesus within us.

A colleague of mine had an eye-opening experience a few years ago. His daughter turned 16 and he and his wife gave her permission to have an overnight sleepover as a party. And she could invite eight of her friends from school. The eye-opening experience occurred on Sunday morning when they were getting ready for church. Of the eight girls only two attended church. And only two others knew the words of the Lord's prayer. Of the other four girls two of them didn't know the words of the Lord's prayer. And two of them didn't know what the Lord's prayer was.

We live in a very superficial culture. A culture where anything is deemed to be more important than the eternal issues of God and faith. Are we as parents making sure our children are wearing the robe of Christ? Now I understand that the other clothes we buy for school, uniforms for sports teams and costumes for dance, I understand those are important. But even more important in the life and development of our children is that robe of Christ. Making sure that our children have that robe on.

Christ sends us into the world to be disciples and as he sends us he doesn't give us a plan. He simply gives us a mission. He gives us the mission of sharing his love in word and in deed. And to share it in ways that bring joy to our hearts as disciples. Are we responding to that love of God that acts upon our lives by letting it put us into motion? Are we responding to that? Are we going forth into the world sharing the love of Jesus?

I know that confronting evil is a daunting task. Jesus knows that, he says in fact, "I'm sending you out like sheep among wolves." But he doesn't end with those foreboding words. He also gives us a promise. "Do not worry about what you will say, for the Spirit of the Father will speak through you." As liberating as that is we don't have to worry about having the right words.

One of my father-in-law's favorite quotes and he shared it many times. And it's become one of my favorites was from the old Methodist bishop who said, "Eloquence is but the evidence of commitment." Think about that. It's not how eloquent our words are. It's about how committed our lives are. Committed to the love of Jesus and making that love known. Would you like to hear the voice of God speaking in your life this week? It will and you will hear it as you share the love of Jesus with those who are hungry and thirsting for love. As you go forth from here, may you hear God's voice abundantly and loudly. As you live out your discipleship to be and make disciples for Christ.

#### PRAYER

May that piece of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. AMEN

Pastor V