

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ!

Do you remember the line from the theme song for the old cowboy show Rawhide? There was a line in it that went something like "get 'em up, move 'em out, rawhide!" Now that line might have been more appropriate for my thoughts this morning had the show been about herding sheep rather than cattle, but the sentiment is the same. Jesus sends his disciples out. He sends them out as lambs, up and off they go. They go at his command and with his blessing, they take nothing but they go. No time to prepare, consult the internet, GPS or even a travel agent, no itinerary, some instructions from Jesus and be on your way!

Thinking about this brought a smile to my face as I recalled my last walk from my home in northern California. It was on a Monday morning and I got a call from LCC in Nisswa to make sure I was still coming that week since they were planning my installation as part of the following Sunday services. I said I was. I left later that morning, checked into the Days Inn in Nisswa Tuesday evening, walked into the office Wednesday morning. I had time to prepare, pack, I knew where I was going, how I was going to get there. So I went. Now I am not comparing myself to one of the twelve, or the seventy for that matter. But the instructions from Jesus remain the same: "Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves..."

After five years I was on my way again and this time settled here in Cook. I think I've done what I was sent to do in Nisswa, and here, but I tell you I have done nothing good of myself, but anything good that has come out of any ministry I have done has been because of Jesus acting in and through me. And so it is with those Jesus has sent out, on their way because Jesus sends them, hastening to admit upon their return that they did nothing of themselves but whatever good they have accomplished has been in Jesus' name as his hands and feet, sometimes giving God voice, in whatever time and place in which they found themselves.

Now brothers and sisters, you and I are those whom Jesus sends ahead of him. We are to do as Jesus commands simply in the course of our normal lives. And this is where we point toward Jesus, away from ourselves, because you and I in all ministry we do are simply doing as Jesus would us do. We set aside ourselves in obedience to Jesus, we lay aside our personal likes and dislikes, and minister to the "least of these" and to those who are full of themselves. What we do is not because we are running for office or as part of a sales pitch, or some kind of self-aggrandizing self-promotion. Whatever our culture thinks is immaterial because we do what Christ would have us do. We are to leave our baggage at the door, we are to leave our own ideas, agendas, goals, we simply share the Good News of the Gospel; Christ died and rose again for us and we are saved by grace through faith and all that we are to be about is part of our witness to, for, and of, him!

We are to bear one another's burdens fulfilling the law of Christ, in our homes, families, neighborhoods, offices, golf courses, fishing boats, recreational vehicles, we

do this not because of our own goodness, not to make the news, but to experience real joy, to share in wonderfully fulfilling moments in the ebb and flow of life, to participate, touching lives with the life of Christ lived in and through us. As Jesus emptied himself so we empty ourselves, serving others, serving Christ, obeying Jesus' commands.

And this is a crucial moment brothers and sisters, because Jesus tells us that "the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." We ask this in prayer, and the truth is that the Lord of the harvest has answered our prayers and you and I are those laborers whom he sends out, here at home and elsewhere. It's you and me friends, you and me!

Many of you Jesus sends out and the ministry you do, the service you render, is here at home. You don't pick up and leave, you stay here, still called to mission, in northeastern Minnesota. Some of that mission takes place within the physical location we know as Trinity Lutheran Church. Yes, this is part of the mission also because you are called to witness, to invite, to invite others here in the wonderful facility that we are in right now. We build on the foundation poured by Christ, on that which has been build on that foundation even back to the seventy sent out by Jesus. We build on that foundation, we build on the legacy of those who started this church here in Cook, ninety years ago. We have been entrusted with this legacy.

We are Christ's laborers, his witnesses to the ends of the earth if necessary, and it is through our testimony that we speak, through our actions, to testify to the world, to the culture of what it is to be a disciple of Christ. Not through pompous grandstanding statements about how pious we are but through our service and giving to others.

We have a mission from Jesus, we are people on a mission from Jesus, we are part of his church, our purpose is to tell everyone who has been here, who is here now and who will come again, to prepare his way. To prepare the way of the Lord!

AMEN