



Liturgical Day: The Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

Date: June 15, 2008 (*Father's Day*)

Sermon Title: I Am Sending You Out

Grace to you and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

This week's Gospel lesson recalls the time when Jesus sent his twelve apostles out to spread the word about the kingdom of heaven. Jesus had been teaching and preaching and healing and casting out demons. His ministry was having a remarkable affect on those who spent time with him. The Pharisees are already on record as being opposed to him: they accused him of being in league with Satan. But the people loved him, and his message, and his healing touch. The problem was, and he speaks about this specifically in today's Gospel lesson, there were so many people who needed to be touched – many more than any one person could reach – even the son of God.

So in an act that provides a hint of what would eventually happen in the early church, Jesus takes his central twelve followers aside, he gives them the power to perform the same kinds of wonders that he himself had been performing, and then he sends them out to spread the good news of the kingdom all over the land. They are not to pack a bag and bring everything they need with them, but they are to trust that God will provide for them along the way. In that way, he sends them out.

The apostles receive that call and they follow it. As they go, they find that they are able to do amazing things. They cure the sick, they raise the dead, they cleanse lepers, and they cast out demons. And we can only imagine how the people are touched by this ministry. It is clear by the actions of these Apostles that the kingdom of heaven is indeed near.

This is a story about being called by God to ministry. It is a story that teaches us a number of things about what it means to be called by God to ministry. We learn:

1. There is much that God wants to accomplish in this world.
2. God has chosen to do this work through people.
3. What people are called to do can be far beyond what they are capable of accomplishing on their own.
4. And when the task is something greater than what is humanly possible, it is God who provides the strength and power to make it happen.

It is interesting that this Gospel lesson comes up this particular Sunday. Many of you know that I spent the past week at Rainbow Trail Lutheran Camp. I was there with more than a hundred Middle School students, and a staff of about 60 High School and College aged kids. As usual, it was a remarkable week – and I feel very fortunate to be in the position to do that once each year.

Let me just offer an aside, and say that Rainbow Trail Lutheran Camp is a remarkable ministry, and we are fortunate to have it in our synod. I know their ministries have touched many young people from this congregation. If you haven't established the custom of sending your sons and daughters to a week at this camp each summer, you really should. They are transforming lives in a remarkable way – and we are misguided if we don't take advantage of that opportunity. This year's camps are pretty much full. But registration opens again the first of December, and if you've got young ones in your home, I strongly encourage you to consider giving them the gift of a week at camp in the summer of 2009. I guarantee you won't be disappointed!

Anyway, this past week at Rainbow Trail, the Bible study focus was on the call each of us has received from God. We began the week by remembering our baptism,

FIRST LESSON

EXODUS 19:2-8A

PSALM

PSALM 100

SECOND LESSON

ROMANS 5:1-8

GOSPEL LESSON

ST. MATTHEW 9:35-10:8 [9-23]

PRAYER OF THE DAY

GOD OF COMPASSION, YOU HAVE OPENED 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.

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and our belief that in the waters of baptism, God calls each of us to become involved in ministry. The work of the kingdom – the work that Jesus performed, and the work that he entrusts to his Apostles in today's Gospel lesson – the work of the kingdom is not something that is just done by professionals. No, the work of the kingdom is the responsibility of all the baptized. God's gifts of forgiveness and renewal are promised to us in baptism, but in those same waters we also receive a call from God.

As we continued the study last week, we reflected on what that call is all about. It is a call that we must accept. We are all called by God, but it is up to each of us to discern exactly what that call is for us, and how we will live into it. Frederick Buechner put it well. He once wrote that our call is where our greatest passion and the world's greatest need intersect. That is a helpful place to start, and I encourage each of you to give that some consideration. How is God calling you? Where do you have specific gifts and interests and passions that meet the needs of the world? How can you become involved in the work of the kingdom? These are the kinds of questions that people ask, when seeking to discern exactly what their call is.

We learned, this past week, that God's call is one that addresses every moment of every day in our lives. Our faith is not just active during that hour or two we spend in this building each week, or when we are with our Christian friends. But we are called by God to be faithful with every moment, with every thought, with every decision, with every conversation, with every action.

And finally: it is a call that involves us in nothing less than the attempt to change the world. Here our call is like that of Jesus' apostles: our calling (like theirs) is a pretty tall order. But we are able to follow that call because of our belief that any success we might experience does not rise or fall on our own gifts and abilities. Instead, it depends on God's faithfulness. If we offer ourselves in response to a call from God, it is God who will ultimately be the reason for our success.

I had some great conversations this past week with young people who are thinking very seriously about what God is calling them to do in this world, and I encourage each of you to be thinking in the same way. What is it that God is calling you to be about? How are your gifts and abilities and passions able to be put into service of what God seeks to accomplish in this world? Those are the kinds of questions that rise out of this weekend's Gospel lesson, and out of last week's study at Rainbow Trail.

As we think of being called by God, we can't help but note that today is Father's Day. Let me say it again: "Happy Fathers' Day to all the dads who are here this morning." Fathers' Day is a fun day for many of us. It is a day to help Dad feel good about what he contributes to the family, and so we shower him with cards and gifts and hugs and kisses – all intended to say "thanks" for the ways in which our Fathers have been a blessing to us.

Fathers' Day is also a day for Dad to consider his call to be faithful to God in addressing his responsibilities as a father. I read an interesting study not too long ago which suggested that fathers have an incredible influence on whether or not their children will grow up to be people of faith. The study didn't in any way try to diminish the importance of what mothers provide in terms of faith nurture for their children. But in a day and time when many fathers are ambivalent about their faith, it made the case that a faithful dad is one of the strongest predictors of whether or not children will have faith when they become adults.

We don't often think of it this way, but to become a father is to accept a sacred calling. God desires to work through fathers to provide for their children faith, and honor, and direction, and purpose, and hope. A Christian father's job is far more than mowing the lawn and changing the oil in the car. A Christian father is called to model the faith for his children; to talk about his faith with his children; to study the Bible together with his children; to lead his family in considering what it means for them to be faithful to the God who has blessed us in so many ways.

On Fathers' Day we thank our dads for the blessings they have been to us. It is also a day to consider what it means that God has called us to be fathers – and how it is we can follow that call, and be a source of strength and encouragement for our families, and for the faith of our family members.

God calls each of us. Whether you are a father or a mother or a son or a daughter; whether you are a banker or a sales clerk or an engineer or a counselor; whether you are young or old, male or female: God calls

each of us. This morning's Gospel lesson reminds us of that. This summer's Bible study at Rainbow Trail focuses on that. And Fathers' Day is a day when we have a concrete opportunity to explore what it means to be called by God. In each of our callings, may God bless us for the work that has been appointed to us. And through our efforts, may the Kingdom of God reach out to claim the hearts and lives of our family members, and others who surround us in this world.

Amen.

David J. Risendal, Pastor (June 15, 2008)

Hymn of the Day		
	First Service	<i>We All Are One in Mission</i> 23
	Second Service	<i>What Is Our Service to Be</i> 26

English Text: ⁱ

^{9.35} 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. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; ³⁸ therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

^{10.1} 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. ² These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; ³ Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; ⁴ Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.

⁵ These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, ⁶ but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷ As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' ⁸ Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment.

[⁹ "Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, ¹⁰ no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for laborers deserve their food. ¹¹ Whatever town or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave. ¹² As you enter the house, greet it. ¹³ If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. ¹⁴ If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town. ¹⁵ Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.

¹⁶ "See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. ¹⁷ Beware of them, for they will hand you over to councils and flog you in their synagogues; ¹⁸ and you will be dragged before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them and the Gentiles. ¹⁹ When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you at that time; ²⁰ for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. ²¹ Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; ²² and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. ²³ When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next; for truly I tell you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes."] ⁱⁱ

ⁱ A list of Bible lessons for the coming weeks is available at www.elca.org/dcm/worship/church_year/lectionary.html.

ⁱⁱ St. Matthew 9:35-10:23, New Revised Standard Version Bible (© 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America).

Greek Text:

9.³⁵Καὶ περιήγεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὰς πόλεις πάσας καὶ τὰς κώμας διδάσκων ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς αὐτῶν καὶ κηρύσσων τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας καὶ θεραπεύων πάσαν νόσον καὶ πάσαν μαλακίαν. ³⁶ἰδὼν δὲ τοὺς ὄχλους ἐσπλαγγνίσθη περὶ αὐτῶν, ὅτι ἦσαν ἐσκυλμένοι καὶ ἐρριμμένοι ὡσεὶ πρόβατα μὴ ἔχοντα ποιμένα. ³⁷τότε λέγει τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ· ὁ μὲν θερισμὸς πολὺς, οἱ δὲ ἐργάται ὀλίγοι· ³⁸δεήθητε οὖν τοῦ κυρίου τοῦ θερισμοῦ ὅπως ἐκβάλη ἐργάτας εἰς τὸν θερισμὸν αὐτοῦ.

^{10.1} Καὶ προσκαλεσάμενος τοὺς δώδεκα μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ἐξουσίαν πνευμάτων ἀκαθάρτων ὥστε ἐκβάλλειν αὐτὰ καὶ θεραπεύειν πάσαν νόσον καὶ πάσαν μαλακίαν. ²Τῶν δὲ δώδεκα ἀποστόλων τὰ ὀνόματα ἐστὶν ταῦτα· πρῶτος Σίμων ὁ λεγόμενος Πέτρος καὶ Ἀνδρέας ὁ ἀδελφὸς αὐτοῦ, καὶ Ἰάκωβος ὁ τοῦ Ζεβεδαίου καὶ Ἰωάννης ὁ ἀδελφὸς αὐτοῦ, ³Φίλιππος καὶ Βαρθολομαῖος, Θωμᾶς καὶ Μαθθαῖος ὁ τελώνης, Ἰάκωβος ὁ τοῦ Ἀλφαίου καὶ Θαδδαῖος, ⁴Σίμων ὁ Καναναῖος καὶ Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης ὁ καὶ παραδοὺς αὐτόν.

⁵Τούτους τοὺς δώδεκα ἀπέστειλεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς παραγγείλας αὐτοῖς λέγων· εἰς ὁδὸν ἐθνῶν μὴ ἀπέλθητε καὶ εἰς πόλιν Σαμαριτῶν μὴ εἰσέλθητε· ⁶πορεύεσθε δὲ μᾶλλον πρὸς τὰ πρόβατα τὰ ἀπολωλότα οἴκου Ἰσραὴλ. ⁷πορευόμενοι δὲ κηρύσσετε λέγοντες ὅτι ἤγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν. ⁸ἀσθενοῦντας θεραπεύετε, νεκροὺς ἐγείρετε, λεπροὺς καθαρίζετε, δαιμόνια ἐκβάλλετε· δωρεὰν ἐλάβετε, δωρεὰν δότε. [⁹Μὴ κτήσησθε χρυσὸν μηδὲ ἄργυρον μηδὲ χαλκὸν εἰς τὰς ζώνας ὑμῶν, ¹⁰μὴ πήραν εἰς ὁδὸν μηδὲ δύο χιτῶνας μηδὲ ὑποδήματα μηδὲ ῥάβδον· ἄξιος γὰρ ὁ ἐργάτης τῆς τροφῆς αὐτοῦ. ¹¹εἰς ἣν δ' ἂν πόλιν ἢ κώμην εἰσέλθητε, ἐξετάσατε τίς ἐν αὐτῇ ἄξιος ἐστὶν· κακεὶ μείνατε ἕως ἂν ἐξέλθητε. ¹²εἰσερχόμενοι δὲ εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν ἀσπάσασθε αὐτήν· ¹³καὶ ἐὰν μὲν ἡ ἢ οἰκία ἄξια, ἐλθάτω ἡ εἰρήνη ὑμῶν ἐπ' αὐτήν, ἐὰν δὲ μὴ ἡ ἄξια, ἡ εἰρήνη ὑμῶν πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἐπιστραφήτω. ¹⁴καὶ ὅς ἂν μὴ δέξηται ὑμᾶς μηδὲ ἀκούσῃ τοὺς λόγους ὑμῶν, ἐξερχόμενοι ἔξω τῆς οἰκίας ἢ τῆς πόλεως ἐκείνης ἐκτινάξατε τὸν κονιορτὸν τῶν ποδῶν ὑμῶν. ¹⁵ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ἀνεκτότερον ἔσται γῆ Σοδόμων καὶ Γομόρρων ἐν ἡμέρᾳ κρίσεως ἢ τῇ πόλει ἐκείνῃ.

¹⁶Ἴδου ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω ὑμᾶς ὡς πρόβατα ἐν μέσῳ λύκων· γίνεσθε οὖν φρόνιμοι ὡς οἱ ὄφεις καὶ ἀκέραιοι ὡς αἱ περιστράϊ. ¹⁷Προσέχετε δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων· παραδώσουσιν γὰρ ὑμᾶς εἰς συνέδρια καὶ ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς αὐτῶν μαστιγώσουσιν ὑμᾶς· ¹⁸καὶ ἐπὶ ἡγεμόνας δὲ καὶ βασιλεῖς ἀχθήσεσθε ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ εἰς μαρτύριον αὐτοῖς καὶ τοῖς ἔθνεσιν. ¹⁹ὅταν δὲ παραδώσιν ὑμᾶς, μὴ μεριμνήσητε πῶς ἢ τί λαλήσητε· δοθήσεται γὰρ ὑμῖν ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ὥρᾳ τί λαλήσητε· ²⁰οὐ γὰρ ὑμεῖς ἐστε οἱ λαλοῦντες ἀλλὰ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν τὸ λαλοῦν ἐν ὑμῖν. ²¹Παραδώσει δὲ ἀδελφὸς ἀδελφὸν εἰς θάνατον καὶ πατὴρ τέκνον, καὶ ἐπαναστήσονται τέκνα ἐπὶ γονεῖς καὶ θανατώσουσιν αὐτούς. ²²καὶ ἔσεσθε μισούμενοι ὑπὸ πάντων διὰ τὸ ὄνομα μου· ὁ δὲ ὑπομείνας εἰς τέλος οὗτος σωθήσεται. ²³Ὅταν δὲ διώκωσιν ὑμᾶς ἐν τῇ πόλει ταύτῃ, φεύγετε εἰς τὴν ἐτέραν· ἀμὴν γὰρ λέγω ὑμῖν, οὐ μὴ τελέσητε τὰς πόλεις τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ ἕως ἂν ἔλθῃ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.]ⁱⁱⁱ

ⁱⁱⁱ St. Matthew 9:35-10:23, The Greek New Testament, Aland, Kurt, Black, Matthew, Martini, Carlo M., Metzger, Bruce M., and Wikgren, Allen, (© 1983, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft Stuttgart).