

June 18, 2023: A Pastoral Message by Pastor Margaret Keyser

~ **Third Sunday after Pentecost**~

Fathers' Day

"Do not worry about how you are to speak"

Our services can be found on our website at www.barrechurch.com

Scripture Reading: Matthew 9 v 35 – 10 v 1 and 5-23

1. Introduction:

We all know that it feels good, and that it is important to be equipped to do the things we need to do, or like to do, as parents, or activities such as sports, music, quilting, taking care of animals, gardening, farming and much more. At work there are certain requirements to fulfill the job we are hired for, and as parents the job is never done, right?

2. Jesus calls and sends out the twelve:

In our passage Jesus recognizes some serious problems and needs among the crowds, and immediately calls His disciples to let them know what is going on. They will now become His core leaders with the task of carrying forth His message and ministry. He gave them the authority and equipped them to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness, something they had not done before. This happened after He had gone through the villages Himself and preached the Gospel and healed the sick from their diseases. There He saw the crowds being helpless and harassed, and He had compassion on them. The Greek term for compassion is best translated as "His heart went out to them". He saw a huge problem and needed some action here. They were like sheep without a shepherd, the text says, and then He told His disciples that the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. He also tells them to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into the field. Before anything is planned and acted on, let us pray to God for God's help and guidance.

After Jesus equipped His disciples with the gift of healing and exorcism, He gave them instructions for the mission He wanted them to fulfil. He made it clear that they were to go to the Jewish villages, and not enter the Gentile areas. They would not be ready for that as

beginners anyway. Start with your own people, He says. Tell them that the Kingdom of heaven is near. Make disciples of these people and heal them, raise the dead, and drive out their demons. This is urgent because My heart is aching for My people. They need help! They need leaders who care for them!

3. The nature and challenges of discipleship:

Jesus instructed them to travel light because they will be invited by people who will be hospitable to them. You should greet them with a greeting of peace, and if they are not welcoming to you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town. Please remember that this calling of yours is no small feat. You will encounter opposition, which at times might be dangerous for you. “I am sending you like sheep among the wolves.” The sheep are not the strongest animals, and they could be endangered by wolves in the area. But then Jesus continues saying, “Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves”, meaning, in the words of RT France in his commentary on Matthew, do not be helpless and gullible like sheep, but be like the snake with an instinct for self-preservation. And then, be as innocent as doves, meaning, be shrewd, but without the venom. Jesus warns them about the persecution that they will encounter, not because of who they are, but because of His Name and His message. The more they do this work, the more opposition there will be, from kings and governors later on.

4. Conclusion - Do not worry about how you are to speak:

But, when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say, He says. This is the crux of the message to them in verse 19 and 20. It is important to understand that the message and work of discipleship are supported by the presence and power and guidance of the Spirit of God. Everything you do and say must come from God. Then, do not be afraid of anyone, of how you are to speak, because the Holy Spirit is with you to help you.

What does this all mean for us as disciples of Christ today? Matthew is reminding us of our own call to discipleship here in Barre and beyond, perhaps? We are reminded that Jesus sees the crises in the lives of people, that the harvest is plentiful, and that there is a need for workers to meet the needs of people around us. He makes an urgent call to the disciples then and to us, to see and to hear the needs around us. The needs are of a material nature,

and they are spiritual. Then, we are called to go out and spread the message of the Kingdom of God, of the love of Christ for everyone, and to let those in need know that here is a place to come together, to feel the comfort with God and the community of God. We ought to speak, and we ought to do the things that meet the needs of people. What are those things, we may ask? What else can we do? What is it, Lord? And are we equipped to do them? These are the questions we as individuals and the congregation must engage in going forward. What do you want us to see, and what can we do?

It is wonderful to know that the Holy Spirit is with us always to help us discern, and to help us out there as we meet new people who need a place of worship and a place to feel connected. We need not worry about how to speak. And so, may God through the Holy Spirit lead us this morning, and especially our fathers and those who are not fathers to hear the call from Christ, and to answer the call, and to be led and equipped by God to love and to serve. God's blessings on you as you reflect on this message this morning. Amen.