

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Luke 10:1-20

“Now after this....” After what? Jesus had just emphasized that to follow Him requires discipline, obedience, and a willingness to put Him first in everything. Then He sent seventy-two out in pairs to the cities that He was about to visit.

The fact that Jesus sent out “seventy-two” lets us know that He did not just expect the twelve apostles to be bearers of the Gospel. He expects it of all of us. Let’s emphasize here and now, however, that none of us will be perfect bearers of the Gospel. Some of us may not even try, but failing to be perfect and failing to try do not cost us our salvation, nor does it cost us God’s love. Both are assured by Jesus’ death on the cross. Having said that, what life applications can we learn from this passage?

Verse 3 tells us not to always expect a grateful welcome. There is hostility against the Gospel and Christianity in our world. It’s essential to recognize the reality of evil and be wary of it.

Verse 4 points out that the mission is urgent.

Verses 5 through 12 seem a little removed from our time, but there is an important instruction for us here. Offer the gospel to everyone; demonstrate the love of Jesus to everyone. If, however, you are met with hostility, leave that one behind and continue to share Jesus with more people. To keep hammering on one person who doesn’t want to hear means that many who want to hear may not have an opportunity. Verse 12 points out the true tragedy of the scenario Jesus describes.

In verses 13 through 16 Jesus speaks of the cities in which He has worked miracles that are not even recorded for us. The obvious truth that they revealed was rejected and those cities and their residents would not see the joy of heaven.

I think that we see Jesus’ joy and also His humor as the passage closes. The seventy-two return in awe at the things they were able to do through Jesus. I think His smile was large as He said, “I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning!”

Finally, and most importantly, Jesus reminds us of the true gift of grace—“...rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven.”

Get to know God through His Word this week!

(A message from your Iowa District West Christian Education Committee)

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Luke 10:1-20

1. What “harvest” is Jesus referring to in vs. 2? Who is “Lord of the harvest”? Who were Jesus’ “laborers” in the text? Who are His laborers today?
2. What challenges would the seventy-two face? What assurances did the seventy-two have?
3. What positive reports did the seventy-two share after their journeys? What was the reason for their success?
4. What warnings does Jesus give to those who reject Him?

For Family Reflection

5. How does your church share the Good News of Jesus with your community? Do you have teams that visit homes in your community? What are some of the outreach initiatives of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod? Who can you tell about Jesus?
6. Are our names “written in heaven” (vs. 20)? When were they written down? What confidence do we have because our names are “written in heaven”?

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

Luke 10:25-37

This “scribe” or “lawyer” approached Jesus to test what He would say to certain questions. Probably a Pharisee, he hoped to prove that Jesus was a false messiah. He came filled with the hope of success. But, the scene didn’t play out as planned. Instead of answering the lawyer’s presumptive words, Jesus asked him a question.

After reciting the answer that he assumed Jesus wanted to hear, the lawyer asked Him another question: “Who is my neighbor?”

Don’t we ask the same question and for the same reason? The Bible says that the lawyer wanted to justify himself. We may not believe that we can justify ourselves to God, but we do like to think that we have done all that is expected when it comes to loving our neighbors. Like the lawyer, we try to limit the definition of “neighbor.” It’s not that we don’t care about others, but we have busy lives and can’t be expected to dedicate too much time to people that we really don’t know all that well.

At the end of the parable of the good Samaritan, the lawyer was forced by his own honesty, and the power of Jesus’ teaching, to admit that one is a neighbor if we come in contact with him or her; if they need our help or our ear to listen. This is true even for those we don’t like or respect. The victim in the parable was clearly a stranger to the people who passed him by and to the Samaritan who helped him.

This was a hard lesson for the Jewish lawyer. Samaritans were despised by the Jews. A good Jew would lengthen his journey by walking around Samaria in order to avoid touching its soil. Yet this Samaritan honored God more than the Jewish priests who ignored the victim.

The lawyer’s mind must have reeled. The Jewish victim would have hated his helper. Having been robbed, he could not even pay back his benefactor. He was just plain stupid for being alone on the robber-infested road to Jericho. It was his own fault he’d been hurt. Yet, the Samaritan showed “compassion” to this inept Jew.

Luke doesn’t share the outcome of this encounter. How did it end? How will our stories end? Can we learn from Jesus to show compassion and mercy to all that we meet?

Do you get together with friends for a regular time of Bible study?

(A message from your Iowa District West Christian Education Committee)

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

Luke 10:25-37

1. What question did the lawyer bring to Jesus? Did the lawyer have the right answer in his head? Did the lawyer have the right answer in his heart?
2. What was the response of the priest to the man in need? What was the response of the Levite? What was the response of the Samaritan?
3. Jesus says to the lawyer (and us) “You go, and do likewise.” What excuses might we have for not responding to those in need? Who forgives all our excuses?
4. Who is The “Good Samaritan” who made the sacrifice to take care of us when we were spiritually wounded? Were we Jesus’ enemies when He came to help us? Did He help us anyway?

For Family Reflection

5. Who are our neighbors? Are our neighbors just the people in our neighborhood? Can you think of a neighbor in need? How can you as a family assist them?
6. The Good Samaritan helps an enemy. Is it harder to help somebody that we may not like or that may be different from us? Can you think of someone in your school, community, or elsewhere that is hard to accept and help? Pray that God gives us loving and helping hearts.

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

Luke 10:38-42

“Mary” and “Martha” are two people who are discussed in some of the best selling books on the shelves today. Oh, you may not see their names in many of these publications because these loving women are more often referred to by terms like “left-brained” and “right-brained,” “organized” and “disorganized,” or “great housekeeper” and “don’t go over there before you call.” In our Bible studies we delight in comparing ourselves to one or the other of these New Testament women probably more than with any other people in Scripture.

Some wonder if Jesus is trying to tell them that they shouldn’t keep a neat house, while those of us who have been disorganized, right-brained strugglers all our lives delight in this passage and zealously proclaim, “See! Even Jesus says that it’s okay to let the dishes go and find a spot to procrastinate!” But, I’m sure that as much as Jesus delights in our enjoyment of Mary and Martha, He has an important teaching for us in this passage.

Jesus talked to Mary and Martha and the other people in the house that day about priorities. His message for them is perhaps even more important to us today. Our lives are filled with an overload of information, tasks, responsibilities, and desires (even for those of us who aren’t all that concerned about a neat house or a balanced checking account).

Not one of those things is bad for us unless it begins to crowd out our time with Jesus. Martha had placed preparing her plans for her Guest above meeting and visiting with Him. If you are among the many over-stressed pastors, teachers, greeters, leaders, elders, musicians, etc. in our churches, or a parent or company mail clerk, you may identify with the problem.

Whether our inborn natures lead us into being Marys or Marthas, our prayer each morning should be that Jesus will keep our lives focused on Him, and that sitting quietly at His feet will always be at the center of our lives.

Join a regular Bible study—it will change your life!

(A message from your Iowa District West Christian Education Committee)

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

Luke 10:38-42

1. What were Martha’s priorities? How did she try to make her priorities also those of Mary?
2. What were Mary’s priorities? How does Jesus affirm those priorities?
3. Where else in Jesus’ ministry do we meet this family? (See John chapter 11) What good news did Jesus have for Martha (John 11:25)? What miracle did Jesus perform for the family?

For Family Reflection

4. Jesus noted that Martha was “anxious and troubled about many things” (vs. 42). What makes you anxious or troubled? What message does Jesus have for you?
5. What’s the “one thing necessary” (vs. 42) that Mary chose? When and where do you take time to listen to Jesus? What distracts us from listening to Jesus?
6. Is it wrong to try to be hospitable like Martha? Do we need people to make meals, clean rooms and in other ways serve others? What is Jesus’ reminder to us?

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

Luke 11:1-13

Do we need to pray? God knows our prayer before we begin, but He tells us to share with Him our praise and petitions. It isn't something that we fully understand, but it is part of being His children. He says that our prayers affect what happens in our lives and in the lives of our friends, family, and our world. Incomprehensible.

The disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray. That wasn't an unusual request. In those days many teachers composed prayers for their disciples to learn and recite. We still recite the prayer in this passage when we worship each week.

Prayer is so important that Jesus gave the disciples two illustrations of our relationship to God through prayer. In one example even an irritated friend comes to the aid of a visitor who is in need. In the other, even parents who are evil people do their best to give what is good to their children. In contrast, then, how much more will our perfect heavenly Father grant our desires?

Repeatedly Jesus used the terms "shall" and "will" in connection with prayer. Never did He say "maybe." Prayer *shall* be answered.

So, is the good news that we can have anything that we want? No, the good news is that we can have anything that is in God's will for us. In his gospel, Matthew records that Jesus included in the prayer, "Your will be done" (Matt.6:10). Our prayers first center on God and what He would have done in our lives. That's the hard part of prayer.

When we pray, and we should be praying many times a day, God calls us to turn our desires over to Him and trust Him to answer according to His will and not our own. We are called to give up control—to place our children, parents, plans, and lives, into His care. We are called to praise Him for His answers, even when we don't get what we want.

Unbelievers think that prayer is an easy way out; a method for weak people to avoid responsibility. It isn't. Prayer is hard because it is in prayer that we give all that we hold dear into God's control.

Join a regular Bible study—it will change your life!

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Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

Luke 11:1-13

1. Jesus' lesson on prayer first of all includes "The Lord's Prayer." How does this text compare with Jesus' similar lesson in Matthew 6:9-13? How does this text compare with the Lord's Prayer we typically say in worship and other settings?
2. What lesson does Jesus teach in vs. 5-8? Why does the friend provide bread even at an inconvenient time? Are our prayers ever inconvenient to God?
3. How is God our Father's response even greater than the response of earthly parents (vs. 11-13)?
4. Jesus says "Ask and it will be given to you . . ." (vs. 9). Do we always get from God what we ask for?

For Family Reflection

5. Review Martin Luther's explanations to the petitions of the Lord's Prayer (LSB p. 323). Do you have a petition that is especially meaningful to you?
6. Read or sing "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" (LSB #770). Why do we have the privilege to "take it to the Lord in prayer"? What is your favorite time and place to pray?