

## Sermon for the Feast of St. Luke – Luke 10:1-9

In the Name of the Father and of the Son ✠ and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

As you have noticed, there's something different about today. After 4 ½ solid months of decking our altar and chancel with green, it's now suddenly red. This is a sign to us that we've come upon a festival day commemorating one of those faithful saints who was connected to the life our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Today, October 18<sup>th</sup>, the historic church has remembered St. Luke, writer of the Gospel which bears his name, and missionary pastor with the Apostle Paul.

Luke wrote a large part of our New Testament. He wrote 1 Gospel, sharing the life and teachings of Jesus. He also wrote the Acts of the Apostles, which told the story of Jesus' continued ministry through the church which was born on Pentecost and lives here today. Paul, Silas, Barnabas, and Luke, among others, proclaimed the Gospel. This is how Jesus has His voice heard in the world.

For as much as St. Luke wrote, we still know relatively little about his life. From a few details in St. Paul's letter to the Colossians we find that Luke was from Antioch. By vocation, he was a physician. He was also a Gentile, which is surprising that a non-Jew wrote so much of the New Testament. The Book of Acts tells us that he traveled with St. Paul on missionary journeys. Traditionally, he was said to have lived to the age of 84 years and died as a martyr in Achaia. During his life, Luke gathered eyewitness accounts from those who had been closest to Jesus. He would have obviously had to interview Mary the mother of Jesus, for no other Gospel contains such precise detail about the birth and early days of our Lord. His account, along with others, would become his Gospel which he wrote for a certain Christian named Theophilus. As mentioned Luke was a physician. But God also had in store for him another calling – to be sent forth to preach the Gospel. Hence, the Gospel appointed for St. Luke's Day Luke's own account of Jesus sending the 72 to go ahead of Him into the places He would go.

The Lord said to those 72, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into the harvest ..." The Lord is not talking about oats or barley here. He's talking about human beings – living souls who must be gathered into God's Kingdom of grace, called the Church, before Christ returns to judge the living and the dead. These human beings are the living dead – alive in an earthly sense, but dead in trespasses and sins. Living in sin, they are lost in this world and have no hope for the next. They worship and serve created things and not the Creator. That's what St. Paul calls idolatry.

And what about you? When you're distressed, you don't turn to God, but to yourself. When you face uncertainties and hardships, you get angry and fearful. In those moments, you don't trust in the goodness of God. God's promises don't seem to be enough to carry you through. You're afraid of what's ahead. You refuse to be content with the way things are. You find your refuge and purpose, your help and your hope in other people or things created by God, but not in God Himself. Now if that's not idolatry by the Biblical definition, I don't know what is. Put this together will all your other sins and you've got a mess. These sins are too serious to be forgotten, too grievous to be ignored, and too dangerous to be overlooked.

But that's why you too are part of the harvest. God sent His Son to us as the Chief Worker to gather in His harvest. He became a servant for you. He bore the heat and burden of the day for you. He humbled Himself and became obedient to death, enduring the cross for you. There in that death of His, He died your death that you might live His life.

Not only did the Father send the Son to gather in His harvest, but the Son also sent His disciples out to do the same – to gather in the sinners, redeemed and forgiven by the precious, holy, blood of Jesus Christ. The power and authority of Christ to forgive sins has been given to the church, that is, people who believe in Jesus. The ministers God's people call continue to proclaim repentance and forgiveness of sins in Jesus' name. This is what St. John the Evangelist writes in chapter 20: "The Lord Jesus breathed on His disciples and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.'" Here, Jesus is speaking to His apostles, His "sent ones." What do you believe according to these words? "I believe that when the called ministers of Christ deal with us by His divine command, in particular when they exclude openly unrepentant sinners from the Christian congregation and absolve those who repent of their sins and want to do better, this is just as valid and certain, even in heaven, as if Christ our dear Lord dealt with us Himself."

In Jesus death and resurrection, a new marriage was consummated between Himself, the Bridegroom and all sinners for whom He died, whom He collects in His Bride, the church. After His Ascension, does He end the relationship? Does the interaction and conversation cease? Does the Bridegroom Christ no longer speak to His Bride the Church? We as God's people say with resolution: NO! Jesus sends His 12 apostles so that He might minister to His Bride through them. He sends Paul and Luke and others to speak forth God's truth. He even sends guys like Arnold and Froiland to speak forth this forgiveness of sins in His stead.

He sends men to preach and administer the sacraments. That means that only qualified men can be pastors. That means that women cannot be pastors. As Christians we confess this to be true by Holy Spirit-inspired words: 1 Timothy 2:12, "I do not permit a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man..." and 1 Corinthians 14:34, "... the women should be kept silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to preach ..." As a father tends to his household, so are pastors to represent Christ. Further, a bride cannot be married to The Bride called the Church. When Christ's Word is set aside, as in the case of "women pastors," His office of pastor is no longer present.

Yet Christ still remains united to his Bride the Church through men He calls to be pastors. He has destroyed the idols to which your heart clings. He has gathered you into His harvest when He died for you. He heals you and brings peace to your house. In Christ's ministry, the Kingdom of God has come. Today, the harvest is plentiful. Wheat and wine abound in Christ's Body and Blood given for you. God's treasury of forgiveness is open to you. These words, the words of absolution, are spirit and life and comfort and peace and hope and light: You are forgiven for Jesus' sake. He loves you and you are alive in Him.

The Peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. ✠BJF✠