

September 24, 2017
Sermon for Mission Sunday
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor
Matthew 11:1-15

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Matthew 11:1–15 (ESV)

¹ When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in their cities. ² Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples ³ and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?” ⁴ And Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵ the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. ⁶ And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.” ⁷ As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? ⁸ What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in kings’ houses. ⁹ What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰ This is he of whom it is written, “ ‘Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.’ ¹¹ Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. ¹² From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force. ¹³ For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John, ¹⁴ and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. ¹⁵ He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Grace, Mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus,

What Does a Missionary Look Like?

When The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod looks for missionaries these days, what are they looking for? What does the LCMS Board for International Mission, look for in our missionary recruitment today? What kind of characteristics and abilities do they need to possess if we're to send them?"

We all have in mind what a missionary looks for...don't we? We've seen pictures of skinny guys, many with beards, some wearing clerical collars, some in local garb. Some in shorts and t-shirts. Crew cuts, long hair. Young, old, musical or can't carry a tune in a bucket.

We all have an idea of what they should look like, but what about their demeanor? Their attitude? Or how they conduct themselves. How they act or get along in worship or Bible Study, or just in talking to others.

In the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 11, Jesus makes His contribution to this conversation when He asks the crowd three questions:

First question: *"What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?"* (v 7).

A shaking reed is a person who's always putting his finger into the air to see which way the wind is blowing, and he changes his opinion and sometimes even beliefs every time the wind changes direction.

He's a yes man, a floppy reed with no spine.

The answer is Jesus' question is obviously no, the crowds didn't go out to see somebody like that. They went to see a man with a backbone, who had the strength, courage, and resolve of the prophet Elijah to speak the Word of God; to preach the Law and repentance, and to point to the Lamb of God, even if it landed him in a dungeon—which it did.

Missionaries today must be like John and have the intellectual capacity and moral fortitude to stand firm against all the challenges in the twenty-first century.

Second question: *“What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses”* (v 8).

John did not wear the luxurious attire of a king. He wore a prophet's uniform. People saw him, and they saw Elijah. Our visitor this morning, Elijah, is wearing the kinds of clothes that his namesake probably wore.

What do missionaries look like? Do they have to wear designer shoes, a \$2,000 Armani suit, and power tie. He wears what suits him for the job that he is doing. If he is going out to work in a field, it may be jeans and a t-shirt. If he is an ordained pastor it may be the not-too-stylish clerical shirt and pants, the uniform of the pastor. Wherever he goes, people will see him and know that he is not a government official or a rich businessman from America, but just a humble messenger who brings the Word of God, who brings Jesus, who brings the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

What does a missionary look like? A missionary dresses for his surroundings and the job that he has to do to carry the Gospel. It's not about the clothes, it's about the Word of God.

The third question Jesus asks: *"What did you go out to see? A prophet?"* (v 9). Yes, the people went out to see a prophet, and Jesus says that they indeed saw a prophet, yet more than a prophet. John was a *"prophesied prophet"* whose person and coming was foretold by prophets like Isaiah (40:3–5) and Malachi (3:1), whom Jesus himself quotes: *"Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you"* (v 10).

But the most moving prophecy came from the lips of John's own father, Zechariah. Recorded in Luke 1.

"⁷⁶ And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, ⁷⁷ to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, ⁷⁸ because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high ⁷⁹ to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." Luke 1:76–79 (ESV)

What makes Zechariah's song about his son so moving is that John the Baptist would be martyred for preparing the way for Jesus.

Today, missionaries do not go before Jesus but come after Him; nevertheless, they are sent by our Lord to bring the "knowledge of salvation to His people in the forgiveness of their sins . . . to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death."

By coming after Jesus, they are greater than John in the sense that they stand with both feet in the New Testament. In the person and work of Christ, the kingdom of God has fully come.

Matthew 10 and 11 could easily be called an instruction manual for missionaries. It actually begins at the end of ch 9, where Jesus says, "*The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest*" (9:37–38).

And it's not just pastors or missionaries that go all over the world. The harvest is plentiful right here and right now!

There are countless stories about things that happened in Houston and the gulf coast during and after Hurricane Harvey. People, every day people dressed in their every day clothes are becoming missionaries, even just for a day or an hour, as they reach out helping others.

I saw raw news footage of an overturned jeep and a group of men and women, all skin colors from all walks of life, made a human chain and waded out in waist high water and snatched an infant out of the jeep and passed it along the chain as they continued to work to get the parents out.

Synodical President Harrison and District President Hennings were working on a crew in Houston, clearing brush and debris from one house and the crew was invited in to lunch by a neighbor, who had no idea who they were. They were able to make a connection and President Hennings is still in contact with that family.

Elijah the service dog was in Houston too. Making opportunities with comfort to share the Gospel with others.

Not just in Houston, but when the wildfires were raging around Bowie back in 2009, I saw other raw news footage of dozer making a fire break and when the back of the dozer caught fire and the operator got out to douse the flames, low and behold, it was Gerald Hammer being a missionary by cutting that fire break.

But it doesn't have to be a big disaster. Missionaries come from all walks of life. No special training needed...just the love of God. And they are needed every day. Even among our Christian brothers and sisters.

Last Sunday's sermon was about forgiveness. The greatest need that we have is to be forgiven. Where else if forgiveness found but in the Gospel of Christ!

And God our heavenly Father has equipped all of His children, all of us, to give that greatest need to others.

God's forgiven children giving the message of forgiveness to those that need it. What better messengers. Sometimes it takes a tragedy to open the door. A hurricane, a flood, a fire, a sickness or even a death. There is no special training needed. As a child of God you are already equipped.

Sometimes words are not even needed, just the presence of someone who cares because the Spirit of God lives within them.

Go, You have been equipped. In Jesus name.

Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

S.D.G.—Soli Deo Gloria

Sermon Outline

What Does a Missionary Look Like?

Matthew 11:1-15

- I. Like a man who has the strength and courage to stand firm against the world in the twenty-first century.
- II. Like a humble man or woman of God who brings His Word wherever they go.
- III. Like a prophet giving knowledge of salvation to people for the forgiveness of their sins.