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SOLI DEO GLORIA
John 20:19-23
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John 20:19-23 ‘...So I Send You!’

I learned something this week from a devotion with our Preschool staff. The very first time Jesus referred to His disciples as ‘brothers’ was after He rose from the dead. In Matthew 28:10 Jesus told the women who witnessed His resurrection, ***“Go and tell ‘My brothers’ that I have risen!”*** Before this the 12 were ‘disciples’. They were students, apprentices, followers, and aids. But immediately after Jesus rose He called them ‘brothers’. Before Jesus was crucified His disciples did not comprehend the full scope of His identity and mission. They ‘followed’ Jesus. They went into town to pick up supplies while He waited at the well. They passed out loaves and fishes as Jesus directed them. They sailed the fishing boat back and forth across the Sea of Galilee where Jesus told them. They cast nets where Jesus pointed. They tried to stay awake while Jesus prayed. But after His resurrection Jesus called them ‘brothers’ to make a point about His mission. They were ‘brothers’ with Jesus sent out to represent Him and proclaim salvation in Jesus’ name.

When Jesus appeared to the 10 disciples that first Sunday evening He said, ***“Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me so I am sending you!”*** As the Father sent His Son Jesus, so Jesus sends His brothers as His witnesses to the world. I want to take a look at what that means for us this morning.

You are a member of Christ’s holy Church. You are identified as such by your baptism and your public confession of faith. You make this public confession by your membership and participation in a Christian congregation. Your public confession of faith by your

membership in a congregation is very important. There is a point in our Christian walk when we are all learners. We learn of Jesus. We learn to pray. We go to Sunday School and Confirmation Class. But there comes a time in our walk with Christ that we are ready to be Christ's witnesses. We always continue to learn, but we also take our place in the service of God's kingdom as brothers and sisters of the Lord Jesus. Jesus says to us as He said to His disciples, "***As the Father has sent Me, so now I send you.***"

First, God sent His only begotten Son to the earth as our Savior. Jesus is God of God, light of light, very God of very God. Jesus is the very image of the Father for all people in the world.

By Holy Baptism Jesus has declared you to be his own son or daughter born again by the water and the Spirit. Jesus has given you this identity that you may consciously represent Him to the world. Jesus sends us to be the light of the world. The Gospel of salvation is to shine forth through us. The world sees Jesus through us who are His representatives. As the Father has sent Jesus so Jesus sends us.

Secondly, Jesus said in John 5: "***I come to do my Father's will.***" Jesus fulfilled His Father's will through obedience. So Jesus sends us to fulfill the Heavenly Father's will through obedience. We are sent to uphold God's moral law as examples of His righteousness to the world. By walking in obedience to God's holy will we fulfill His calling to be His witnesses in fulfillment of His command.

Thirdly, the Father sent His Son to suffer and die in His purpose to bring salvation to the world. Jesus accepted this burden as He said in Luke 22, "***I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.***" The prophet Isaiah identified the Messiah as the 'suffering servant. So also Jesus sends us prepared to suffer for the

sake of the Gospel. St. Paul was prepared to suffer so that the Gospel would be proclaimed. This is our calling too. As the Father sent the Son prepared to suffer in His purpose to fulfill His Father's will so the Son also sends us.

Fourthly, The Father sent His Son to proclaim the Word of God. Jesus said in John 5 that He speaks nothing except that which the Father has given Him to speak. So also Jesus sends us. Jesus calls us to speak the Gospel of God's Holy Word of God. He doesn't call us to come up with our own creative ideas about the truth. He calls us to learn His Word be faithful to the Word. Jesus said, *"If you continue in my Word you will know the truth. And the truth will make you free."* We proclaim the truth of God's holy inspired Word.

Fifthly, The Father sent His Son to forgive the sins of sinners with His own life. The Father sent Jesus to be the sacrifice that takes away the sin of the world. Jesus now sends us to proclaim forgiveness of sins to those who repent and believe and to withhold forgiveness from those who do not repent and do not believe. Jesus has given the Church the authority to do this in what is called the 'office of the keys'. Christ entrusted the 'Office of the keys' to His church which is that unique church authority to pronounce decisively the black and white of God's plan of salvation. Those who repent of their sin believing in Jesus Christ as the Son of God who died and rose shall be saved. Those who do not repent nor believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Savior are not saved. This awesome authority is extended to every Christian. As the Father sent Jesus so Jesus sends us.

Sixthly, by virtue of His death and resurrection the Father gave Jesus the authority to come again in glory to judge the living and the

dead. Jesus told His disciples in Matthew 19:28 that those who have followed Him will sit on 12 thrones in judgement of the 12 tribes. In 1 Corinthians 6:2 St. Paul said, ***“Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?”*** As the Father sent His Son as Judge, so the Son sends us with authority to judge the world with God’s Word of righteousness. We do not judge by our own opinions or by worldly convention. We are to judge according to the clear standards established in God’s Law. Christians are no to shuffled about with our heads down, embarrassed by our faith. We are called to stand straight with confidence in our divine authorization to speak as Christ’s witnesses declaring the Word of Christ to the world.

Finally, God so loved the world that He send His Son. God sent Jesus to love the world. So also Jesus sends us. Love one another as Jesus has loved you. How much did Jesus love you? He loved you so much He did not withhold His very life to serve you. Love others with this same love. Speak the truth in the love of Christ.

“As the Father is sending me, so I am sending you.” Jesus gave this command to His disciples on the evening of His Resurrection. Jesus has authorized His Holy Church to preach the Word as Law and Gospel; to ordain pastors and teachers into service of the Word; to administer the sacraments according to His command. This holy authority gives us confidence to declare the Good News of forgiveness and eternal salvation through faith in Jesus’ name.

“As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.” So Jesus calls us into the service of His Church. Go in the joy and the empowerment of Christ’s power and grace. Amen.