

SERMON FOR SUNDAY, JUNE 14 AND WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17

Pent 2A Matt 9:35-10:9 "Getting Over Ourselves"

Dear fellow redeemed of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, when the apostles heard what Jesus told them to do in today's Gospel lesson, they probably thought, ***You've got to be kidding!*** Did you hear that to do list? ***Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons.*** Sure, they had seen *Jesus* do these things, but . . . *we* can't do that!

Well, they were right. They had to learn what every pastor and every Christian has to learn: **to get over yourself.**

You see, while they would be the ones through whom God would heal, raise, cleanse and cast out, it wouldn't *be* them doing these things, but God.

Nothing in them would qualify, enable or empower them to be disciples. Not their learning, their leadership, their charisma, their dashing good looks, or anything else in them, only the power and authority of Christ that would accomplish these things.

The very power and authority Christ had given to them. They had to learn to get over themselves, their doubts and fears, and do what had been given them to do . . . and have ***Christ work through them.***

And so as if to emphasize that point, Jesus continues with a description of *how they are to go*, and what it's going to be like out there. Don't take any supplies, He says. Rely on what you are given.

I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. You will be dragged into courts. You will be flogged. It just keeps getting worse and worse!

First, they were given a seemingly impossible to do list, and then they were to do them in the midst of an impossible situation. They must've thought, what have I signed up for? Discipleship never seemed so . . . ***so deadly.***

Precisely. When he'd called them, Jesus said, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men. Now they began to see where are they were following Him to...The cross. They began to realize that they too must die. Not literally, at least not yet.

No, they had to *get over themselves* (or in other words, die to themselves), so that they live in Christ.

In Him and His Word alone. Relying solely on Him. For it is His work, not theirs. His Word, not theirs. His authority, not theirs. His mission, His harvest, not theirs. **And the less of them and the more of Him, the better.**

And so, Jesus sends the twelve out with nothing, to do what they themselves are unable to do, in order to teach them.

Teach them that it will be Christ and His Spirit working and speaking through them. They need only go.

Pastors need to learn this as well. We need to get over ourselves. For we are not in control.

The Word and work and power is Christ's. Pastors are simply Jesus' ambassadors, speaking what they are given to speak, and giving what they are given to give.

God alone grants the growth, gives faith, and changes hearts and lives. No pastor can do these things.

For only the Word and power and authority of Christ can use water to cast out demons and raise a person who is dead in sin to a new life.

Only the Word and power and authority of Christ can heal those who are sick with the always fatal disease of sin through the word of absolution and forgiveness.

Only the Word and power and authority of Christ can make bread and wine the body and blood of Jesus to feed and strengthen us Christians with the faith and forgiveness we need for this life.

Only the Word and power and authority of Christ can fill preaching with the power to grab hold of a hell-bent sinner and turn them in repentance.

Like the 12, pastors need to learn ***I can't do that!*** And no amount of learning, leadership, charisma, or dashing good looks will be able to change that. Those things are good and useful, but cannot take the place of the power and authority of Christ.

But it's not just disciples, apostles, and pastors need to learn this – **so do you**. You who are the priesthood of the baptized.

You have not been given the same to do list as the disciples or pastors. What tasks have been given all Christians to do?

It sounds something like this: Love your enemies. Pray for and do good to those who hate and persecute you. And oh, yeah, do it perfectly. Be a *perfect* father, mother, son, daughter, husband, wife, boss, worker, friend, neighbor, and citizen.

To which our response should be: ***You've got to be kidding! We can't do that!***

Or maybe, in our zealous delusion of power, we answer like the Israelites did at Mt. Sinai: ***yes, we will!*** . . . and then we don't.

No, we're not perfect, we're not even close, right? We *hate* our enemies, we *forget* to pray, we do good mostly to those who can do good back to us, and we demand perfection from those around us, even as we fall far short of the same standard.

And then, despite all this sin and failure, how often do we have the audacity to look around, filled with pride, and think: ***I'm not doing so bad!*** Oh, the road to hell is a crowded one indeed.

And so you too need to get over yourself.

And if pride means to be full of ourselves, then it is repentance that empties us of ourselves. Daily repentance is the road of discipleship that takes us to the cross and kills us.

Repentance means to confess that ***we are that bad.*** ***We*** are the persecutors, not just the persecuted. ***We*** are the wolves who bite and devour one another.

We put people on trial in our own courts with laws of our own making, and sit as our own one-man judge and jury.

We don't drag people before kings – we take on that role ourselves, with our condemning thoughts and words, assuming the worst about others, and taking delight in our superiority.

We need to acknowledge that Jesus sent the disciples out as sheep among wolves because He sent them to people like us.

But if He sends apostles and pastors to people like us, it is because *He* came for people like us. The Good News for you is that ***He sends them to people like us to give Himself to us.***

For ***He*** is the Lamb of God who came into the midst of a world of sinful wolves. ***He*** is the One hauled before Pilate and King Herod. ***He*** was the One flogged by men and then devoured by death on the cross, that in His resurrection from that death,

He defeated all that defeats us. Our sin, our enemy satan, and our death, all swallowed up in His victory.

That His life become our life. To make transform us wolves into sheep and sinners into saints through the resurrecting power of the forgiveness of our sins.

Jesus came to be for us what we could never be for ourselves: a perfect son of God. And then to give His perfection to us as a free, undeserved, gift of grace.

And while some unbelieving folks hear this and say: ***You've got to be kidding!*** this is what St. Paul was talking about in his letter to the Romans.

That while we were still weak – or in other words, powerless, unable to do anything for ourselves;

while we were still sinners, ungodly and unrighteous;

while we were facing a future of temporal and eternal death. . . God sent His Son, who took our place and died for us.

Not because we were good people, or righteous folk who needed a little help, or because we had any redeeming qualities in us at all. But simply because of His gracious, merciful, love.

God wanted us, and we needed Him. And so, Jesus came to undo what Adam did.

He came to undo His sin, His death, and His expulsion, so that for us there is *forgiveness* of sin, *life* from death, and a *home* in Heaven.

That is the gift Jesus sends His disciples to give. That is the gift through which the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Every healing, cleansing, exorcised demon, and resurrection of a dead person was not an end in itself, but signs that the kingdom of heaven was at hand.

That the forgiveness of Christ was a complete forgiveness and triumphed over *all* that affects us in this body and life. Little pointers to, the resurrection that is ours in Christ.

And so, the disciples went, following in the footsteps of Christ. And you know what? ***The disciples did those things they thought they couldn't do.***

Because they were not alone. And as we go forward from this sanctuary, as you live in Christ and Christ in you, you begin to do those things you thought you couldn't do.

Those things Christ has given *you* to do: helping, praying, forgiving, serving, loving.

Never perfectly in this life (to be sure!), and so also following in the footsteps of your Savior to His cross, to die and rise with Him. To repent and receive His perfect forgiveness.

So follow those footsteps now again today to this altar, to your Savior, to eat and drink His body and blood; to live in Him and He in you; to receive the faith, forgiveness, and resurrection you need to live this life you have been given to live. AMEN