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St. John's & Immanuel Lutheran Churches – Kimball, NE & Burns, WY

Second Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 6A)

June 18, 2017

Text: Matthew 9:35–10:8

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The apostle Paul declares that we Christians “rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation” (Rom. 5:11). In Jesus, we sinners are reconciled – brought back together in a perfect, harmonious relationship – with God. We rejoice because we are saved from God’s wrath. Instead of condemnation, we are justified – declared righteous – in God’s sight. Yes, we rejoice because we are reconciled with God. Nothing stands between us and God. Not sins, not death, not fear or shame. We are reconciled.

That ministry of reconciliation is what the Lord Jesus was doing in today’s Gospel reading. Matthew 9:35 provides a wonderful summary of reconciling ministry, “Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction.” The Lord Jesus went about teaching, preaching, and healing in order to reconcile us to the Father. That same ministry of reconciliation continues in the Christian Church through the same means of teaching, preaching, and healing.

Throughout our Lord’s ministry, Jesus would enter a village and go to the Jewish synagogue. The synagogue was where the Old Testament was read and taught, where the great deeds of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were retold and proclaimed. Jesus took them to the Scriptures to teach them doctrine. “Thus saith the Lord” for “it is written.” And Matthew records in another place, that “the crowds were astonished at His teaching, for He was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes” (Matthew 7:28-29).

Jesus taught them that the Old Testament was coming to fulfillment – in Him! Try to imagine the amazement Jesus caused as He taught those God-fearing Jews that Moses, David and the other psalmists, Solomon, and all the prophets were writing about Him, about Jesus! He’s the subject of the OT because He is the long awaited Messiah, the Savior of God’s people. No wonder people were astonished!

In His teaching, Jesus confronted His hearers with the truths of the Scriptures, truths that pointed to Him alone. It wasn't enough simply to believe in God. Nor was it enough for them to hope in any ol' Messiah. One must believe in the God who gives His eternal Son to be the Messiah who delivers His people from sin, death, and the devil. Jesus taught God's people that God loved them and wanted to be reconciled to them through the forgiveness of sins. Through Jesus, they learned that God the Father wanted to dwell with them and in them graciously through the Holy Spirit.

And Jesus preached to them a message "The kingdom of God is at hand" (vs. 10:7). There's a good deal of overlap between teaching and preaching but there are some distinctions. Teaching is instruction in the content of the Bible, what it says and means. Preaching takes that knowledge and information to the next level and says, "And this Biblical teaching applies to you. Do you believe what God's Word says to you?" Preaching takes away the theoretical or the hypothetical and says, "Now the kingdom of God is here. Be reconciled with God through faith in Jesus. Believe God's Word, receive its discipline and its nurture so that you can live in God's grace and mercy all your days."

Yes, preaching gets personal at times. For the preacher and the hearer. That's because God's Word, according to Hebrews 4:12, is "living and powerful...and a discerner of thoughts and intents of the heart." The Holy Spirit uses the teaching and preaching of God's Word to reveal the truth about ourselves, about God, and about one another.

This is the kind of teaching and preaching that Jesus did while traveling throughout the cities and villages of Israel. This is the kind of teaching and preaching that the Church is called to do today. And I must confess, this kind of teaching and preaching is difficult. Pray for me, dear saints of God. That I may teach and preach with Christ's authority so that people will hear and believe the good news of God's kingdom.

The third characteristic of Jesus' ministry of reconciliation was healing the diseased, the oppressed, and the afflicted. Jesus came as the good Physician of the body and the soul, healing every kind of disease, casting out demons, giving sight to the blind, speech to the mute, hearing to the deaf. Wherever Jesus was, death, disease, and the demons fled. Our Lord is greater than them all; with Him came the Kingdom of God.

His healing ministry prepared the way His cross and open tomb. Jesus knew where He was going. He was inviting the crowds to follow Him through His death to the

resurrection to eternal life. He was teaching, preaching, and healing them so that they would rise to live forever under Him in His kingdom.

And our Lord went about teaching, preaching, and healing because of His great love for His people. Matthew 9:36 records, “When He saw the crowd, He had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” Jesus never wearied of loving people. He never complained about people constantly needing Him. He saw in their faces the deep lines of anxiety over work, family, health. He saw in their eyes the search for something certain and concrete. “I will be your Shepherd,” says Jesus. “I will be your God and you shall be My people redeemed by My life, death and resurrection.”

What is utterly amazing is that Jesus, feeling the great needs of His people, commissions His disciples to pray “earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest” (9:38). The response to human need is to pray. It’s simple enough. But the compassion of our Lord comes to the world through the prayers of His people. And we mustn’t overlook what the Lord commands us to pray for: more preachers and teachers of His Gospel. That ministry of reconciliation continues in Christ’s Church!!!!

And the first thing Jesus does after commanding His disciples to pray for more workers is to call His 12 apostles. To them He “gave authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction” (10:1). With such authority, He commanded them to “go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And proclaim . . . “the kingdom of God is at hand” (10:6–7). At this point in the disciples’ ministry, they are to stay near at hand. But the scope of their ministry will broaden to include the entire world after the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. The Book of Acts records our Lord’s on-going ministry of reconciliation accomplished through teaching, preaching, and healing.

The teaching and preaching part of the Church’s ministry is easy to see. But what about healing? There haven’t been any healing miracles around here. Do you remember that earlier I said those miracles were signs pointing to our Lord’s death and resurrection? Our healing comes to us through the preaching and teaching of Christ’s death and resurrection. The apostle Peter makes the same conclusion in I Peter 2:24, “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.” You have been healed by the Gospel of our Lord. Baptism, Biblical preaching and teaching, Holy

Communion, and Absolution are the healing touch of the Lord Jesus coming to each of you through the ministry of His Church.

Today is Father's Day. In light of today's reading, I want to encourage and commend you fathers and grandfathers. Because of your faithfulness, your families receive the Gospel ministry of the Lord Jesus. Remain faithful in this noble task. The Lord has committed to you the honor of leading your homes in the things that matter most. This time, like no other in human history, needs you to be men, men of Christian faith and virtue. And to you single men, may the Lord prepare you for this highest of callings: to be husbands and fathers of faith and godliness.

We rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom we have now received reconciliation. Rejoice and be glad in the teaching, preaching, and healing of Jesus. That we may rejoice together in this reconciliation, please turn back to your bulletins. I would like us to read together in unison Psalm 100....

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

Now the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. Amen.