

SERMON FOR JULY 3, 2020

TEXT: LUKE 10:1-20

THEME: THE POWER TO CHANGE THE WORLD

Know this; that the kingdom of God has come near.

In the name of Jesus:

When you were a kid what Superhero did you want to be? In Cleveland where I grew up, Superman was the super hero to aspire to, after all, legend has it that the idea of Superman came from a citizen who lived in Cleveland. I remember watching the television show by the same name, seeing Superman flying effortlessly through the skies. Later Batman and Robin became beloved superheroes, again, made famous by a television series by the same name. The comics have always put forth superheroes with superpowers, Spiderman, Wonder Woman, and Captain America, just to name a few. These characters would represent good and fight, and eventually win, over evil. These characters would at times have superpowers that would be used to conquer evil. When I was growing up, seemingly everyone followed or wanted to be a superhero.

Jesus is greater than any superhero, and in our text for today, we see that Jesus gives us supernatural power to change the world for Him.

We see in the Gospel of Luke that the Lord Jesus sends out seventy-two followers. They are to go ahead of Him, two by two, into every

town and place where he himself was about to go. Theirs was important work. They were to do the work of the Lord. Now this is nothing new, for the Lord God has always sent people to do His bidding. He has been sending people out since He called Abraham to follow Him in the Old Testament. God, if He so chooses to do so, can speak to people directly and send them to do His work, like He did with Moses, speaking to him through the burning bush, or on Mount Sinai when he spoke with Moses face to face. But more often than not, what is usually the case, is that God uses means, He uses people, to speak His Word to others. Usually in the Scriptures we see God sending prophets such as Isaiah and Jeremiah to speak in His name and with His authority. Of course, God chose to ultimately speak to the world through His Son, Jesus Christ. The Bible puts it this way: “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup> but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.”

God the Father has chosen to speak to the world, and to you and me, through His Son Jesus Christ. Jesus speaks to us with a purpose, He has a divine mission for you and me to accomplish. First, He tells us what His mission is. As foretold in the Old Testament through the prophet Isaiah: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good

news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed.” This is exactly what took place, for when Jesus was baptized the Spirit of the Lord was placed upon Him, to proclaim the Good News that He came not to be served but to serve and give His life as a ransom for many. Jesus came to do battle with our enemies of sin, Satan, and death, opening our blind eyes to the love that God has for us in His Son, freeing us from the power of sin by forgiving us, the power of Satan by defeating him, and the grip of death by giving eternal life to all who believe in Jesus. This is Jesus’ glorious work, it is why, as we saw last week, Jesus set His face toward Jerusalem, for He was bound and determined to go to the cross to save sinners.

And so Jesus now sends 72 to do His work and prepare His way. He tells them: “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. <sup>3</sup> Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.” And they are given the specific task to go and proclaim that the Kingdom of God is near, by sharing the message: “Peace be to this house! The kingdom of God has come near to you.”

The mission of the followers of Jesus, back then during Jesus’ ministry, and the mission for the Church today, is a mission of peace. We are to be a

people who have received the peace from God which passes all understanding, and sharers of that peace that we have freely received. The peace that the Lord gives is not the peace that comes from the world. Jesus says: “<sup>1</sup> Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division.” And “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”

Jesus came, not to tell the world that all is well with it, because all is not well with the world. All have sinned and now are in the camp of the enemy, the devil. Since birth every human being has been at odds with God. Think of it this way, we have to teach people to do good, we don't have to teach them to do evil, because evil is what comes naturally. Because of sin we are evil to our core, in bed with Satan, doing his bidding, held captive to the powers of evil, sin, Satan, and death. Yet Jesus came to do battle with the devil, fighting for the lives and souls of every sinner by living, dying, and rising again as our Savior.

Jesus came to earth to bring the peace of God, sharing the Good News that sins are forgiven and God's wrath has been appeased. All of this is on account of the blood of Jesus. This is why the angels sang at Jesus' birth: Glory be to God on high and peace to people to have God's good will.” God's love is

yours on account of Jesus. It is yours by faith in Jesus, for it is by grace you have been saved through faith in Christ. Jesus says to you: "Your sins are forgiven, your faith in Me has made you well." God is your friend and your ever present Help in times of trouble. Go, live your life with the assurance that nothing will separate you from the love of God in Jesus Christ.

This is the Good News that those 72 shared on their missionary journey. It is the Good News that has been shared with us, the Good news that we believe, and the Good News God gives us to proclaim today. For we live in a world that seeks peace and love. So many people are angry. Angry at themselves, angry at one another, and angry with God. Yet God's Good News is that He is not angry with us! He forgives us in Jesus Christ. This Good News gives us present and everlasting joy, for by God's free gift of love in Jesus Christ, your name and my name is written in heaven. Our joy lasts forever, for it is rooted in God's eternal promise to love us, to forgive us, to take care of us, and to bring us to the everlasting joys of heaven.

This is the Good news that God calls us to share with others. This is powerful news that changes life. The Apostle Paul says that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of Christ. This is why we are not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God to save all who believe. God has given to you faith, so that by the sharing of your faith, others might believe in Jesus, just

as Isaiah prophecies in the Old Testament lesson for today, that people might delight in the blessings of God from the people of God, that they may drink deeply from her glorious abundance.

We have the power, in Christ, to share God's Good News of love in Jesus Christ. It is a message that has changed your life and mine, it is a message that has the power to change the world. By sharing with others what God has given to us. The Bible says that just as God has blessed us in the spirit of gentleness, so we too should live in the "spirit of gentleness. <sup>2</sup> Bear one another's burdens, sharing what we have with others, for God is not mocked. Freely have we received, so we should freely give, not out of force, but out of love, sowing the seed of God's Word so that by the power of the Spirit others will reap eternal life. And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. <sup>10</sup> So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, but especially to those of the household of faith."

God gives us supernatural power in Christ to change the world. Change takes place when we live out our faith and share the Good News that God really loves us. If we want to change the world for Christ, we will have to start showing that we really care for people.

You know the story of the Good Samaritan, of the Samaritan who stopped by the roadside to help one in need. I recently heard an interesting

spin on that story, which speaks to how we as a church and as the people of God fail to get involved.

The story involves a man who was on a luxury liner. Suddenly he falls overboard. He can't swim and in desperation he begins calling for help. Now it just so happens that there were several would be rescuers on deck who witnessed the incident. The first man when he saw the man fall overboard he immediately lectured him that he should have worn a life jacket. The man next to him saw the man fall overboard. He immediately jumped into the water and began swimming all around the drowning man saying: Now just watch me swim. Do as I do and you will be alright. The person next to him happened to be a member of a church. He looked upon the drowning man's plight with deep concern. He yelled out: Now, just hold on, friend. Help is on the way. We are going to establish a committee and dialogue your problem. And then, if we have come up with the proper financing, we will resolve your dilemma.

And finally, the last man on deck, he saw the situation for what it was. He immediately plunged into the water, at the risk of his own life, and pulled the victim to safety. The moral of the story is this: the harvest is plentiful, but the WORKERS are few. God calls us not only to pray for workers to go to work, we need also to be ready and willing to do the work that the Lord has us to do, sharing the love of Christ, inviting others to follow Jesus, in our homes, in our

congregation, in our community, in our nation, and to the ends of the earth.

And God has given to you the power to make a difference, giving you His Holy Spirit not only to believe in Jesus, but to tangibly share His love that will change lives, thereby changing the world for Jesus. To the glory of God and in Jesus' name.

Amen