



## Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

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June 8, 2008  
4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
Matthew 9:35-10:8  
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: Exodus 19:2-8a  
Psalm of the Day: Psalm 100  
Second Lesson: Romans 5:6-11  
Gospel: Matthew 9:35-10:8

### **Freely You Have Received, Freely Give!**

Compassion  
Authority

There was a group of people in a room discussing what makes Christianity unique. Some suggested God becoming man. Someone else pointed out that in the Hindu religion that is also taught. Some talked about the virgin birth. Someone else pointed out that that is in another religion. Someone said it is resurrection from the dead. Someone else pointed out that is also taught in other religions in the world. Finally, C.S. Lewis, the author of the Chronicles of Narnia, Near Christianity, the Screwtape Letters and other books, entered into the room and asked what they were discussing in such a heated manner. So they told him they were trying to answer the question, "What is it that makes Christianity unique?" C.S. Lewis said, "That's easy. It's grace."

Undeserved love for undeserving sinners is what makes Christianity unique among all world religions. If you look at any other world religion, it is always about God or some being or some thing rewarding those who work hard and do good and are good. You hear it all the time, even in society today, don't you? Karma—don't you hear about karma all the time? If you are good to other people, good will come back to you. It's just another way of saying work righteousness, isn't it? Christianity doesn't teach "do good and be good and then God will forgive your sins." Christianity teaches "you are filthy and wretched. You deserve nothing but hell, but guess what. God loved you and took away your sins." That's grace.

Or as Jesus puts it in our reading from Matthew today, as he sends the twelve out, he offers them this motivation, "Freely you have received, freely give." Don't serve because God is going to give you something back. Don't do things for other people, don't preach the good news so that you'll get a higher place in heaven, don't serve and do all these things so that you get something from God. God has already given you everything. Freely you have received. You didn't do anything. You were still sinners. Paul laid that out pretty clearly in our Second Lesson, didn't he?

Freely you have received compassion. Jesus told the disciples they had received authority to do amazing things and as we consider that, we'll see that same compassion surrounds us every day of our lives. It's not the same authority that God has given us, but God has placed authority into your hands and my hands as his children, as his people. And he says to us also, "Freely you have received, freely give."

In this section of our Savior's ministry, he was going through these towns and villages. It was an ongoing thing. Day after day he was going through all these places. Day after day he was confronted with something that moved him, that moved his internal organs is literally what it means to have compassion—moved his stomach, his intestines, everything. It touched him when he saw how harassed and helpless the people were that he was going and ministering to. They were harassed and helpless specifically because they were like sheep without a shepherd. God had put people over them that were supposed to be their spiritual shepherds—the teachers of the law and some of the other people. But these people, instead of teaching about the suffering servant that is talked about in the Psalms and in Isaiah, the suffering Messiah who would come and by his wounds we would be healed, the one who would be the Lord our righteousness that Jeremiah talked about; they were too busy talking about the conquering Messiah who would come and get rid of all their enemies.

They were teaching the people that the way to hasten this day and get rid of the Romans would be to obey God's law more fully, more completely. If the only message you ever get is "do what is right before God and then God will love you," you are going to be pretty harassed and pretty helpless because neither you nor I are going to do what God demands of us. We are going to fall short all the time.

So Jesus had compassion on them. His compassion led him to preach the good news about the kingdom. His compassion moved him so much that he said, "Not just me alone is going to be able to do all this." So he gathered together the twelve and he gave them authority to back up the message that they were going to speak. He gave them authority to do miracles, incredible things to cast out demons; to raise the dead, to heal disease and sickness. He sent them out and said, "Go and preach this message—the kingdom of God is near." The kingdom of God is Jesus' rule among us. He lives and dies in our place.

The twelve were chosen, not because they were special people. If you go down that list, the ones you know about, you know Peter. You know how he always stuck his foot in his mouth. You know they all ran away when Jesus was betrayed and you know Judas was the one who betrayed him. Jesus entrusted this task, to go announce his compassion to those who were harassed and helpless, to a bunch of guys who were no different than you and me. They were weak. They wilted under pressure quite often. They didn't do everything perfectly and they didn't even do everything well always. But God entrusted to them the message of reconciliation like Paul said in our Second Lesson, that there is now between us and God. He entrusted that to them and he sent them out.

But did you notice what he did before he sent them out? He asked them to pray. "Ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field because the harvest is plentiful." Every person you look at is part of that harvest, right? Every person you look at needs God's compassion. Every person you look at was born sinful, born separated from God, born on the road to hell, so they need God's compassion. They need to hear that Christ lived and died in their place. They are part of the harvest. So Jesus tells them to ask God for workers.

Then did you notice what Jesus does in the next paragraph that we read? “Well, if you guys are praying for workers, guess what. You’re it. You’re the answer to your prayers. Now get out there and go from place to place.” God wants us to pray fervently about things that concern us.

But there is a truth also today that we often are the answer to our own prayers. If we have someone that we love that has wandered from the truth, if we have someone that we love that seems to be drifting away from walking closely with Jesus as Lord and Savior and we say to God, “Lord, I love this person. I don’t want to see them in hell. I want you to use someone to bring them back. Use someone to teach them who Jesus is and how this is the most important thing in our lives because our lives could end at any moment Lord.” We can pray fervently and we can pray with tears and we can pray and pray and pray, when we stand up from our prayer, the Lord’s answer might well be, “Tag, you’re it. Go. You know the good news. You’re talking to me about it because you know it and believe it. So you go share the love of Christ in your words and in your actions. You go be patient and loving and kind. You don’t repay insult for insult. You repay love for insult. You live as a little Christ and you share Christ with this person, and then just leave the rest in the Spirit’s hands.”

Very often you and I are the answers to our prayers. That’s why we are encouraged and taught to pray dangerously, which says, “Lord, use me for the things that concern me.”

You and I have freely received compassion from God. You can’t say it much more clearly than Paul did in our Second Lesson, can you? While we were still sinners, while we were powerless, while we had nothing to offer to God, God gave everything to us. He lived in our place. He died in our place. He gave us the gift of faith through the water and the Word. He strengthens that faith through the Word and through the Lord’s Supper. He comes to us again and again and again because he is love and he is compassion and he knows how desperately we need him.

But he has also given us authority. He might not have given us the same authority to go out and cast out demons, to raise the dead, to heal the sick, but he has given to each and every Christian authority. If you aren’t sure about it, come to the Sunday afternoon Family Bible Studies—the One Another passages. Love one another. Serve one another. Encourage one another. Teach one another. Admonish one another. You look at all these different passages and he isn’t talking to the clergy. He isn’t talking to the called workers. He is talking to the Christian. You have the authority from God to teach and admonish one another. He has called you to do that. He has said to you, “Always be ready to give an answer for the hope that you have, but do so with gentleness and respect.”

Are you ready? Can you proclaim the love of Christ in a way that someone else can understand it? Not in a way that brings them to faith, because that is not your job. That is the Holy Spirit’s job. But can you tell people God’s law? Can you tell people about God’s gospel? God has said, “Always be ready.” That sounds like a command, doesn’t it? This is a task, an authority he has given to you, and he has told you to be ready to

do it. If you're not ready, then you've failed him, haven't you? Isn't another word for failing God, sin?

So the answer is to always be ready to give an answer. The answer is to know God's Word so that you can teach and admonish it. The answer is to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Like I said before, you and I are just like those twelve guys that Jesus sent out. We are going to screw up. We aren't going to speak when we should. We are going to change the subject. We are going to get nervous, and we aren't going to teach and admonish like we should. Sometimes we are going to change the subject because we don't feel comfortable telling someone else they are a sinner even though that's the authority God has given to each one of us. And that is going to be sin.

But just like those twelve, we are covered with Christ's compassion. Christ lived and died in our place for our shortcomings. He lived and died and spoke perfectly where we have spoken imperfectly. He carried every one of our denials of him, because every time we change the subject, we are denying Christ. He took them to the cross and took them away. He has poured out compassion upon compassion upon us and that is what moves us to share him with others.

"Freely you have received, freely give." You have received God's love. Give it to others. Share it with others. You have received confidence from God that in all things God will be with you. Share it with those who are hurting. You have received from God the knowledge that Jesus is the only answer to the world's greatest problem. He alone is the source of our grace. Share it with others because you have been entrusted with that authority.