



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
AND
IMMANUEL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
www.mzluth.org and immanuelshirley.com

July 6, 2025

Pastor David Ruddat

4th Sunday after Pentecost

First Lesson: [Ezekiel 2:9-3:11](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 67a CW²¹

Second Lesson: [1 Peter 5:1-4](#)

Gospel Lesson/ Sermon Text: [Luke 10:1-12,16-20](#)

UNDIVIDED ATTENTION
On the Want for Workers
THE LORD WATCHES HIS WORKERS

- **Bringing** _____ **to** _____.
- **Bringing** _____ **to the** _____.
- **Being at** _____ **with** _____.

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

CHILDREN'S DEVOTION

Have you seen one of these? Have you seen this kind of book? This is a book called Where's Waldo. In this book, there are all kinds of people on every page. Do you know all the people in there? The challenge is that you have to find this guy. This is Waldo. So you have to look on every page. Do you see how some of these pictures kind of look like Waldo and kind of not? You really have to stare at these pictures for a long time to find Waldo.

In the Sermon for today, Jesus is talking about the fact that there are a lot of people in the world (that's kind of like how there are a lot of people on these pages), but there are very few workers—people who are willing to share the Gospel with them. That includes pastors, Sunday school teachers, grade school teachers, staff ministers, but it also includes you and me, as believers. There are very few people in the world that really talk about Jesus in the correct way. But if you think of the world being a ton of people, there are only a very few that are going to have the right message.

So Jesus encourages us to go out into the world and tell the message to all these people. That means you. Maybe you'll be a pastor, or a teacher, or a staff minister. Maybe you'll be a mom or somebody working at work and you'll be sharing Jesus with

somebody else. Then you will be just like Waldo, just like someone very different but also having a message to share. Let's pray: *Lord Jesus, we know that the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few, so we ask that you will be with us and help all of us and help the Church at large to send out workers to share the good news of Jesus. We pray this in your name, Amen.*

SERMON

Grace, mercy and peace are yours from God our Father through our Lord and our Savior Jesus Christ.

*Direct us now, O gracious Lord, to hear aright your Holy Word.
Assist your minister to preach, and let the Holy Spirit teach.
Let eternal life be found by all who hear the Gospel sound. Amen.*

Are you naturally an optimistic person? Is the glass always half-full? On this 4th of July weekend, if you're not inclined to be optimistic, maybe there is a little bit of optimism about the people of our country. Maybe even about our government itself. Are you an optimistic person?

Are you optimistic when it comes to other people? I'll share something with you. When I think of other people, I'm not very optimistic, but my Lord Jesus, your Lord Jesus, is optimistic about people. I will look at people and say "They're a bunch of rotten sinners, just like me." And Jesus says "Yes, they are rotten, just like you, Dave, but they are ripe for harvest." That's an optimism that we don't have naturally. And that's an optimism that is even surprising when Jesus is speaking these words in [Luke 10](#) because Luke tells us (and earlier we talked about this in previous sermons) that Jesus has set his direction towards Jerusalem to suffer and to die. He knows what is ahead of Him. He is going to be facing the enemies, His enemies among the religious leaders of the people, and they are going to come at Him with both barrels. They are going to say all kinds of mean things about Him. They are going to conspire against Him so that He would be nailed to a cross. Jesus knows that people are going to be abandoning Him because His teachings are too hard for them to take. Not just among the religious leaders but the people that were with Him in that moment. And yet He still had an optimism that says "The fields are ripe for harvest."

It's not an easy harvest. Jesus says "The workers are few." Jesus sends out 70 or 72, the manuscript evidence isn't conclusive whether it was 70 or 72, so if you look in your Bibles at home, you are going to find 70 or 72. Either it's going to be printed as 70 and the notes are going to be 72, or it's going to be swapped around. Jesus will settle this when He comes again, or when you are there in heaven, among all your many questions you can have for Jesus. You can ask Him, "Where there 70 or 72." We don't know their names. We know three things about them.

1. We know they were followers of Jesus but not of the Twelve. They were not the disciples. Jesus sent out the disciples earlier in [Luke 9](#), and here it's identified that these are 70 or 72 others.
2. We know that they were called by Jesus. They weren't submitting their resume to Jesus saying "I really want to do this." Nor were they submitting their resume to the places that Jesus wanted them to go and say "I want to really be your servant here." No, Jesus is the one who calls them. And Jesus is the one who sends them out. He sent them out two by two, ahead of Him, to every town and place where He was to go. He was telling them "Don't go to the places that are close to you. Don't go to the places that are easy. No, you are going to go to this place, and this place, and that place. You two, you are going to go over there. You two, you go over there. These are the towns and places where you are to go. I'm going to go after you, but I am sending you to those places. You go your way. You go your way," Jesus says. They weren't to go alone. Jesus sent them out two by two.
3. But also more importantly, and this is our theme for the day, **the LORD watches His workers**. Jesus was watching them as they were going. He is God, after all, even though in His humanity He is going to be where He is. But as God, He is going to see and watch as they go. He is going to rejoice with them (we are going to see later in Luke) when He sees Satan fall like lightning from the sky. He is going to see Satan take a hit every time they are announcing the kingdom of God and it brings faith and it creates faith in a person's heart. But He also is going to see when people reject Him. That's why He said "If they reject you, they are rejecting me." Even when Jesus was not with them physically on this trip, He really was with them. So let's talk more about the details of that trip.

First of all, they were to bring peace to households. These groups of two were sent out. They were not to go fishing for friends. Maybe you've done that when you've gone to a party and there are a lot of people there. You don't know who all of them are but you kind of gravitate toward the people that you know and you start there. Jesus says, "You are supposed to go to the towns I send you to. You are not to be distracted along the way as you are walking. If you see someone you know, just keep going because you are not sent to them. You are going to go to this town that I am sending you to and you are going to find a house there. You are not going to go fishing for the best looking house or the most expensive house, but whatever house is put in front of you, you stay and announce to it 'Peace to this house.' And if there is a man of peace there," Jesus says, "that peace will fill the house." They weren't to go fishing for a nice house and then want a nicer house or where they have kind of good food. That's not what they were to do. They were to stay at that house and minister to them, to announce to them that the kingdom of God is near.

So when they said "Peace" to that house, it wasn't just a greeting. It was some words of theological significance. This house would now have peace with God because of this

announcement. Peace that wasn't there before because of sin and sinful hearts. Peace, because God had come near, come down to earth in the person of Jesus Christ. Peace that only can be achieved by this Jesus living a perfect life and dying the sinners' death and rising from the dead to ensure that through Him you have peace with God.

If that message of peace was believed, then the ministry of the two was received and the two would stay in that house and would not continue to fish for friends or go to another place and stay there, but they were to stay at that house. But then it seems like the lines start to blur. Jesus says, "You go into a house. You announce the message. But then you are also going into that community." As He says: ***"Remain in that same house, eating and drinking what they give you, because the worker is worthy of his pay. Do not keep moving from house to house."*** ⁸***Whenever you enter a town and they welcome you, eat what is set before you."*** ⁹***Heal the sick who are in the town and tell them, 'The kingdom of God has come near you.'"*** Throughout this whole entire relationship of these two going into that town and going into that house, it is one of them proclaiming "The kingdom of God is come near to you," and the people of that house or the people of that town took care of them. "The worker deserves his wages," Jesus says. Whose worker? Not the house's worker, not the community's worker, but the Lord's worker. The two were not to be working for food. They were working for the Lord, who would provide for them through service to that house.

So, first of all, they were **bringing peace to households**. It was quickly moving from that household, but it was designed to be not just that household, but then also **bringing Christ to the community**. That is the second point for this morning. They weren't to "stay" in that house. They weren't to "stay" in that household. They were to actually go into the town and proclaim, "The kingdom of God has come near to you." Jesus told them to heal the sick. The Lord gave them the ability to heal the sick, but He didn't tell them at that particular time what sick they would be healing. They would find out that it wasn't just the physically sick that they would be healing but also the spiritually sick. You can imagine it, if you are coming into a town and you are announcing to them "The kingdom of God has come near. The King is coming. The rightful King, Jesus, is coming. He is coming into Jerusalem to suffer and die. He is heading toward your town along the way. Your biggest problem is sin, and He is going to take on that sin by dying on the cross. And you are going to have peace with God because of that." And then people are going to start saying, "Yeah, but what about cousin Frankie, who is demon possessed?" "Bring him here." Then they cast out demons. "What about so and so that is sick and can't go to the temple or the synagogue?" "We will heal them so that they can go to the synagogue and hear about this peace that they have with Jesus."

This message of the kingdom was to spread, but it was also accompanied by this fellowship of eating together, of spending time together. This would happen organically but you can see how even today the Church of God, where sharing the good news of the Gospel, the good news of Jesus, that the kingdom of God has come near. But we

are also concerned about our neighbors' physical and spiritual needs. We do that organically. We do that as an organization. Both of those things are happening.

By the sending of the two as a one-time event, we see how it's not unique to the kingdom of God. It's more like an internship for the New Testament Church. They got to practice being the New Testament Church before they became the New Testament Church.

What would happen if they only did part of what Jesus told them to do? What would happen if, when they went to those places and they got to that first house and they said "Peace to this house; the kingdom of God has come near," and they just stayed in that house and didn't go from that house to the community around them? What would happen? They would be well fed, but they wouldn't be listening to the words of Jesus. What would happen if they went into that town and they were so concerned about the sick and those who were troubled, those who were demon possessed? What would happen if they just did that and did not say "The kingdom of God has come near to you"? You would say they probably would be famous. They would be popular, but they wouldn't be doing what Jesus has demanded them to do.

As our congregations are looking at ministry and whether we could do more together, I see an overlap with Luke. While Pastor Enderle and I are very careful not to say that the past ministry that we did was wrong, because we were preaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments. We were bringing peace to many households. This was not wrong in and of itself. But we are asking; can we be better at it? Can we be more efficient at it? A farmer can plow his field with a field of oxen, and I'm sure these fields around here, at one point in history, were plowed by oxen, but is there a better way, a better use of time and resources? If a church is to remain healthy, that's the question to ask. Is there a better way to do what God has called us to do?

How we answer that question reveals our sinful nature, doesn't it? Just because we're talking church work doesn't mean the devil stays quiet. It doesn't mean that our sinful nature stays quiet. It doesn't mean that the things that come out of our mouths are always from God. So let me give you a few examples of how our sinful nature is revealed.

Our sinful nature is revealed when we look at the ministry of our congregations in terms of the Gospel, wanting the Gospel just for itself, for its own house, and not for the community as well. That would be like those two going to the house and saying "Peace to this house" and just staying there and not moving onto the community. The Gospel is not meant to be a commodity shared just by you, just something for you to consume, but something for you to share with your individual houses and your community.

Our sinful nature is revealed when we think it's the job of only a select few to bring the message of peace to the community. We work together: pastors, teachers, Sunday

school teachers, leaders, members of the congregations. No one shoulders all the work. Jesus was going to those towns and those places that those 70 or 72 were going, yes, that's true, but He also sent them. They were both sharing the work. That's the pattern we see in Luke. That's the pattern we see as Paul talks about the Church in Ephesus when he talks about pastors building up the Church of God so that they might serve others.

Our sinful nature is revealed also when we think that we're only here to physically heal or to pour out all of our energy into the ills of society without preaching the Gospel. There are many organizations without the Gospel that are helping those who are sick, but what makes it truly special is when the Church of God is doing this ministry fueled by a message of peace. Not just helping the sick with their physical problems but also announcing to them the spiritual healing that they have in Jesus.

Could we build a family that cares for each other and the community, not just physically but also spiritually? I'm optimistic that we can. It's a worthwhile question and requires self-reflection and concern, not just for ourselves but for the harvest of souls. Jesus says, "The fields are ripe. ***The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. So ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field.***" Jesus is encouraging us to take up His cause, to see the world through His eyes, to see a field ripe for harvest and the workers being few. We pray and the Lord answers that prayer by sending us workers. And when He sends workers, and when He sends us, together, He also thinks of us, too. The Lord is watching His workers and has this last and final encouragement that we are **being at peace with God**. That's the third point I wanted to bring up.

I haven't talked about rejection, so let's talk about that. The two are sent to a town Jesus sends them to, to proclaim a message of peace, but that message in that home is not well received. So Jesus says, ***"⁶And if a peaceful person is there, your peace will rest on him, but if not, it will return to you."*** "Don't be surprised by failure," Jesus says. Although failure is a great teacher, you have something that keeps you going—peace with God through Christ. God's Word does not need to be changed because it's unpopular. Sometimes it means it just needs to move on, to the next house, to the next place, so that the Holy Spirit can do His work of bringing people to faith.

A few weeks ago we brought up the concept, and maybe it's a reminder of a concept, of FRAN—Friends, Relatives, Acquaintances and Neighbors. We encourage you to fill out that FRAN and to pray for those and have conversations with them and plant those seeds that you have in the back of the church. But what if it doesn't go well? Jesus says, "Your peace with return to you." You still have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Your relationship with Jesus has not been damaged or injured because your message wasn't well received.

What if it's not just one family or one house? What if it's a whole town? Jesus says, ***"¹⁰But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its***

streets and say, ¹¹Even the dust from your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this: The kingdom of God has come near.¹² I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom on that day than for that town." Then that kingdom of God has come near takes on a darker tone. Jesus brings up Sodom and Gomorrah. Do you remember that story? God comes down, comes near Sodom and Gomorrah. He sees first-hand what is going on there and He destroys the town. Now these towns and places that Jesus was sending out these 70 or 72 had one advantage that Sodom doesn't have, and that is that they had messengers that were going to bring them the message, "The kingdom of God has come near. There is peace with God, peace for you!"

That's why it's more bearable for Sodom than it is for those towns who reject and those individuals who reject Jesus. Although hell is still all punishment, eternal punishment, there is a special level of torment for those who have to face eternity with the truth that they had a chance to be on the side of the Gospel and they rejected it. The Lord is watching over His workers and vengeance is His.

But what if it works out? What if even the demons submit to us in God's name? Even if there is wonderful outward signs and fruit that the kingdom of God is near, what then? Jesus reminds us, "Don't take your joy that the kingdom of God has come, in power. Take your joy and rejoice that your names are written in heaven. Rejoice that God has been gracious to you. You are at peace with God. Rejoice that the kingdom of God has come to you." He gives you opportunities, another opportunity, to be a part of His kingdom. So if you're hearing this, if you're reading this, you still have peace. You have someone who has come to announce this message of peace with God, to you. You can also go with that message of peace. You, His workers, as members of these congregations, as Sunday school teachers, as Christian day-school teachers, as pastors, we go. The Lord watches over His workers. He provides for them. He works through them to build His community of peace. He works through them. He works through you, as you go out into the community as well. The harvest is still there. Jesus is optimistic about the present and the future, not that humanity is getting better. No, humanity is still headed for hell, but without His saving activity, there would be nothing.

So He sees this harvest of humanity as a field ripe for harvest. He is optimistic because the souls who are alive now, the souls that are in your circle now, have opportunities to hear about the message of peace: The kingdom of God has come near to them. We are His workers and He is watching over us. When things go well, He rejoices with us that Satan takes the hit. When things don't go well, He is watching as well and vengeance is His. But most importantly, He is with you, watching, yes, but WITH you for you have peace with God through His life, death and resurrection. Your sins are forgiven through Jesus. Peace to this house. Amen.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. [\(Philippians 4:7\)](#) Amen.