

The Festival of St. Luke, Evangelist  
18 October, Anno Domini 2020  
St. Luke 10:1-9  
Pr. Kurt Ulmer

In the Name of the Father, and of the +Son, and the Holy Spirit.

When you look out at the world, what do you see? Do you see a hopeless mess that causes you dread? Do you see a bunch of people you can't stand because of the way they think? Do you see a world gripped with fear and panic because of the prospect of suffering and death? Do you see tyrannical governments abusing their God-given authority and trying to hinder the spread of the Gospel? That's not what Jesus sees. Jesus sees a harvest ripe for the picking. He sees a world that desperately needs hope. Not momentary hope but the kind of hope that is eternal, the kind of hope that tames death itself and makes the grave a soft pillow.

There is a massive harvest but the workers are few. Sinners are dying. Addicts are trapped and despairing. The young fear living among people and the old fear dying alone. Families are turning on one another and being torn apart. Physical diseases of all kinds are ravaging our bodies. Mental diseases are scrambling our minds. People of differing views can't hardly stand to look at one another let alone have a civil discussion. Monstrous storms level entire cities and snuff out life in mere moments. Demonic lies are being preached and believed as though they were spoken from God's own mouth. There is a tremendous need for the good news, but not enough men preaching it.

There isn't a man, woman, or child who isn't being squeezed by sin's destructive forces. Absolutely no one's life is void of suffering (so don't feel like you have to pretend as though yours is). And so, there isn't a man, woman, or child who doesn't need the hope and comfort that our Lord Jesus Christ offers through His death and resurrection, including you. (The goal of the faith isn't to NOT need to hear the Gospel.) There isn't anyone in your family or in your neighborhood for whom the Son of God didn't descend from heaven and take on human flesh. There isn't anyone walking down the aisle of the grocery store whose sins weren't laid upon Jesus and paid for in full. The jaws of death have been shattered. Everyone...everyone needs to know that. Everyone needs to know that every cause for despair and anxiety have been overcome and overthrown by the Blood of God's Son and His resurrection from the dead.

And so Christ urges us to pray, to cry out to God in the face of such desperate need, as we behold the pain and suffering of those around us, as we hear their laments and their longing for peace. And what are we to ask for? That He would cause the good news of salvation to be proclaimed in every corner of this dark earth. The answer to everything that plagues us in this life is preachers who preach the Gospel. The word of absolution is THE medicine prescribed by the Great Physician of your body and your soul. St. Luke knew medicine. But he came to know that there was no pill or diet or procedure that could free a person from eternal death. There are certainly ways to gain temporary relief or to stave off death for a little longer. But they cannot remove our guilt before the throne of God. That is why the beloved physician began writing. As a good doctor he wanted to give his patients the very best medicine available - the Gospel, the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The final answer to every decease, every trouble, every sin is the Gospel - the promise of the resurrection to eternal life through the Blood of Jesus to all who believe.

This was Jesus' answer. It's quite marvelous how immediately after telling the disciples to pray for more preachers, Jesus says "Go! Preach! Tell them all that the kingdom of heaven has come in the Lord's Christ to overthrow the kingdom of death." More and more preaching, which means more preachers, until everyone under the heavens has been absolved, until everyone has heard of Christ who alone has conquered sin and death, who has overcome the world, who sits on the throne graciously pouring out life and salvation to all who seek God's mercy.

Those who are sent forth to proclaim Jesus Christ and Him crucified are sent into the dark places, into the wilderness to do battle, not against flesh and blood but against the lord of darkness and death and his demonic legions, to stand and give hope in the face of death, divorce, greed, hatred, fear, pandemics, financial ruin, and every other affliction and sorrow which plagues mankind. And their weapon? Not swords. Not programs. Not empty platitudes and motivations. Not even solutions. But a Word. The Word. "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins." These forerunners of Christ are sent into the hours of hopelessness and death to declare that the kingdom of God is at hand in the person and work of Jesus Christ. They are sent to proclaim liberty to the captive and recovery of sight to the blind. They are sent where man's wisdom and man's effort are useless and can offer no hope. The servants of Christ are sent to shine the light of Christ into the bleakest hours, not by taking away affliction but by holding forth the crucified and risen Christ who has overcome the world and emptied Satan's works of all their power.

They are sent to proclaim the holy Law of God to those blinded by their own pride, exposing the works of sin, warning sinners of God's wrath and judgment, and calling them to repentance. They are sent to bind up the wounds of those who have been torn apart by the wolves of guilt and despair and the false preachers who heap on them endless instructions for how to heal themselves. The ministers of Christ are sent to offer the eternal and unbreakable life of Christ to those whose lives and souls are threatened by disease and death. They are sent to do the work of an evangelist - to preach the good news of God's saving presence among men in Christ who graciously absolves through the voice of his ordained servants and by their hands pours the life-giving waters of Holy Baptism and distributes the feast of His Body and Blood that where death and sadness once reigned, life might be the new order of the day.

Why is there an office of the Holy Ministry? Why does God send out men to preach His Word and proclaim His victory over sin and death? Because there is a world filled with heartache and despair and upheaval and hopelessness needing to hear and know that the kingdom of God is at hand to overthrow Satan's kingdom of hatred and lies and death. There are parents standing over the graves of their children. There are children wondering why their earthly fathers have left them and their mothers. There are families staring at piles of rubble where their homes used to be. There are sinners - some who don't believe they need saving, some who despair that they are beyond saving, and some who wear the shame of other's sins against them. There is a harvest everywhere you lift up your eyes and see another person. The world is filled with those who do not yet know Christ and they cannot find hope or comfort in what they don't know. The true and only hope for anyone in this world is Christ Jesus who has taken up the sins of the world, who has been tempted in every way that we are, who has suffered our death and by His resurrection shattered death's iron grip. And how can they believe in Him if they have never heard Him? Faith comes by hearing. Sinners need to hear. Jesus didn't descend from heaven as a book or an idea. He descended as a man with a voice that uttered pure and undefiled truth. Grace and mercy poured from His lips as He exposed sin, as He healed, as He called to faith.

More and more of the Gospel is what the world needs. It may not know it and it will most certainly tell you it doesn't and perhaps even try to silence it as it tried to silence the prophets, the apostles, and Christ Himself. But it needs it none the less. So do you. Pray. Pray that the Lord would raise up those like St. Luke the evangelist and send them out like sheep among wolves that the life-giving waters of the Gospel may flow forth in the wilderness and bring hope into this world of

chaos and despair. Pray that God would make them faithful forerunners who prepare the way of the the Lord Jesus who comes bringing life and salvation.

This Word alone can enlighten the darkness of this sinful world, exposing the way and the works that lead to death and leading us on the path that leads to everlasting life. If you have been given a pastor who does not withhold any of the counsel of God from you, who shows you your sins and beckons you to the holy life of faith in Christ, who absolves you of all your sins by the authority of Christ, rejoice and give thanks because God has heard your cries for help and answered them. Feast on God's Word daily and let it satisfy your hungry soul. Let the Word of Christ be like sweet honey in your ears and in your mouth that it may bring you comfort and peace in the midst of the bitterness of your sorrows and afflictions. And pray. Pray that the Lord of the harvest would fill the earth to overflowing with pastors so that the Word of God would drown out the devils lies and bring healing to the nations.

In the Name of +Jesus.