The 3rd Sunday after Pentecost
June 14, 2026
Exodus 19:2-8a, Psalm 100. Romans 5:1-8,
Matthew 9:35-10:23

Called to the Harvest of the Kingdom

Good morning! Our Collect of the Day is surely giving us our marching orders! We, the Church, are asking God to keep us, not just to give us, but to keep us, hold us, sustain us in his steadfast faith and love, so that we will be empowered to proclaim truth with boldness and minister justice with compassion, for the sake of our Savior Jesus Christ. And we are indeed living in times that require us not to hold back, but to courageously and emphatically declare the love of God, the kingdom of peace and reconciliation that Jesus extends to all people, and to vow to live it out in our daily lives.

By way of background, large sections of teaching in the Gospel of Matthew are divided up into discourses about the Kingdom of God. We have the Sermon on the Mount, the Missionary Discourse, the Parable Discourse, and the Community Discourse, and at the end of the Gospel, the Apocalyptic, or end times Discourse. In between these large bodies of teaching, we have the merciful healing acts of Jesus. Today's Gospel

reading is from what is known as the Missionary Discourse, or the commissioning of the disciples to carry on Jesus' healing, transformative work, and the proclamation of the nearness of the Kingdom of God. Through the authority he gives them they are to be his eyes, his hands, his feet, his voice, and be partners with him in the ministry of reconciliation. And this summons is not only given to Jesus' disciples in his lifetime, but to the early church audience Matthew was addressing after Jesus' death and resurrection, when they faced division and persecution. Believers have been summoned down through the ages to share the good news, and the call has come down to us as well!

In the beginning of the passage, we follow Jesus as he travels to cities and villages, teaches in the synagogues, shares the news of the inbreaking reign of God, and brings healing and relief from disease, deformity, and sickness of soul. When Jesus sees the crowds and interacts with them, he feels deep compassion, the compassion of his Abba, because they are bewildered, wandering, despairing, not knowing how to find the path that leads to righteousness, joy and peace. They are

sheep who are in peril without the love and protection of the shepherd. He is moved to declare that there is a great harvest, great numbers of people who are longing to know of the love of God, the hope of God, and the peace of God, and that there is great need of those who will come forward to be the heralds of the good news of the Gospel!

So, Jesus calls the twelve disciples, and gives them authority, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to be bearers of God's healing and grace. First, they are to proclaim the message to the lost ones of the people of Israel, though as time goes on, this commission is extended to include all people, Jew and Gentile alike. They are to do the healing work that Jesus is doing, and most of all, to share the good news that the Kingdom of Heaven has come near! It is here, it is now, and people are exhorted to hold up their heads and recognize that their salvation is at hand! The disciples are to be travelers, sojourners, just as their teacher is. They are to live simply, taking only what they need and receiving gratefully the hospitality that they are offered along the way. And there are going to be some in the towns and villages who will not receive them, and they will be met with hostility, just as Jesus himself has

encountered opposition. They are not to be troubled by this, but to merely lay it before God, shake it off, and move on. They are to be wise and aware of the ways of the world, and to the wiles of those who will try to deter them from their mission, but at the same time, they are to be vulnerable, compassionate, showing forth the mercy of God in their dealings with all. And they are assured that they will never be alone in their mission, that when the inevitable danger and persecution come, they will be guided by the Spirit in how they are to respond, what they are to say, and in the midst of suffering, opposition, and even death, they will find ultimate salvation.

So, how are we here today called to be missionaries of the Kingdom? Now when I hear the world missionary, I feel uncomfortable. I think of people from a dominant culture coming and trying to convert people to the "true faith", because their spirituality and sacred expression is somehow believed to be suspect, and inferior. Perhaps it is better to say, how can we carry on the mission of Jesus in our day and time? If the mission of Jesus is to show forth the reconciling, healing,

transforming love of God that gathers all people together in community, then how can we help to bring that about?

We can start by living into and embracing our identity as God's beloved people. In today's lesson from the book of Exodus, the Lord says to Moses that he has borne them on eagles' wings and brought them to himself. They are his people, and he is their God. They are for him a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. We, too, are greatly beloved by our God. We also bear in our deepest selves the indelible stamp of God's image, and his covenant is deeply imprinted on our hearts as we seek to walk in the way of his love. Our lesson from Paul's letter to the Romans tells us that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. We don't have to do anything to earn that love. We are loved just as we are, in the midst of all of our shadows, light, giftedness, brokenness, and wholeness. From this place of grace and unconditional love we can extend the love that was given so generously to us with others. Because we have been given the gift of reconciliation, the experience of coming home to God, we can share our stories of this incredibly good news. We can help others to see in their own stories the connection to the Great

Story of mercy, compassion, and the invitation to be God's beloved. We can accompany each other on our journeys as we seek to follow Jesus more closely.

We can carry on Jesus' mission by traveling light. We can let go of our tight hold on what we think are the right doctrines to believe, the right way to be the church, and simply allow ourselves to become living icons, windows through which others might see and be drawn to the Mystery we call God. We can let go of what burdens us and be the living pilgrim church, always open, never arriving, always on the journey, knowing that our true call, home, and invitation come from God. We are always moving, growing, open to celebrating the Holy One in all of God's people, wherever we may find them.

And we can be heralds of the Kingdom by pointing to the signs of its presence, here in our midst, right now, wherever we are. For the reign of God is not an abstract in an ideal world that we are working toward, that will come in the future, when conditions are just right. No, the Kingdom of God is here, now, when people of diverse backgrounds, philosophies, and ways of understanding the faith are open to each other,

are willing to step out and listen, to try to find common ground. The kingdom is here in groups of people who never dreamed they would find community together, and they are surprised by grace and are growing as part of the Vine, the Body of Christ. The kingdom is found in offices, on street corners, on the BART when our eyes meet and we truly see each other for a few fleeting moments. It is in the midst of the messiness of life. It is happening when people support their immigrant neighbors, and protect their dignity, and welcome them into our communities. Listen to the whisper of the Spirit, and the Kingdom is there. For the Kingdom of God is within all of us. We are blessed indeed to be able to celebrate it, to name it and proclaim the hospitality and welcome of Jesus. Amen.