

July 16, 2017

For me, one of the consistently remarkable features of the work of God and Jesus throughout the Bible is that both insist on entrusting humans with their [God/Jesus's] work on earth. God [through Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, the prophets] and Jesus [the disciples, which included even Judas] do their work on earth through the lives of these people who, as we think of them in retrospect, nearly always seem in way over their heads. Even when spectacular things happen [the flood, parting of the sea, manna in the wilderness, earthquakes] it is always within the context of the work humans are doing on behalf of God. To not be too indelicate about it; the world, the creation, people have a problem and generally speaking God sends a flawed human being as the answer. We look at the world, we think of all of the myriad of problems faced by humanity, by nature, by space even [if you know anything about junk in space, you know what I mean by this] and every good Christian/God-fearing person on the planet prays for God's intervention. And God sends... a human. You don't need to be a deep thinker to come to the conclusion, "Are you kidding me?? What are you thinking, God??" Except for the story of the creation and the resurrection this is, for me, the most remarkable aspect of the story the Bible contains.

Throughout the story St. Matthew tells, Jesus is preparing a collection of people to be his change-agents in the world. I spoke of this two weeks past. Jesus teaches and then does/enacts the things he was talking about then he sends people out as his agents into the world. And we need to understand that when Matthew writes his Gospel, he is not simply writing a chronology of the life of Jesus [in fact, very little of the Bible is simply an historic "chronology"] but he is trying to teach a group of people what a Christian is, and how we are to be a community of Christians in the world. One of the reasons the church kept copies of the Gospels and other parts of what we call the Bible, is that someone imagined that there just might be a group of people in the future who need the same stories the community St. Matthew was writing to needed. I don't imagine that they imagined people in Fort Wayne, Indiana, United States in 2017, but someone somewhere thought, "someone's going to need this. Let's keep a copy."

And today, of all days, I would say they're right. Look at what comes to us today. Jesus is teaching his disciples about the work he is sending them out to do. They are sent out, like a sower [a particularly inefficient and sloppy sower, by the way] to spread the "kingdom," which happens to be Jesus's vision of what the world is supposed to look like and what a human being is supposed to be. And they [his disciples] are supposed to go out and spread this story in the world. Spreading is a loose term that can include talking and doing. There are a

lot of ways to be a preacher of the Gospel. Only a couple of them include words. And I am here to offer to you that today, two thousand years after Jesus first told this story and about 1,900 years after St. Matthew wrote it down for a small group of Christians, Trinity English Lutheran Church is a living embodiment of this ancient story. We have been living this story now, explicitly, for a bit of time.

And over the past eight days or so, we have really been living it out. Last Sunday we had a little band of 27 evangelists [who would have thought that TELC has band of mighty evangelists??] hit the streets and greet people as part of Fort Wayne's Open Streets party. We talked with over 350 people, blessing them and sending them on their way. Not everyone wanted to talk and not everyone wanted a blessing. Sound like a story you've heard before? Nineteen people sat at our doors this week on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Tuesday, no one came in. Wednesday nine people came into our church for a variety of reasons, most to pray. And get this, you know one of us has been in Freyman Square during lunch on Thursdays. Someone called on Wednesday to see if anyone would be there on Thursday. This person wanted someone to talk to. TELC has become a living, breathing embodiment of an ancient Gospel story.

But we need to read the rest of the story. None of us are going to be able to tell – maybe for a very long time – what all of our work is going to mean to our city. We will not be able to tell for a while if anything will come of any of this. And even if it comes, will someone be a member? Will someone meet Jesus? Will someone “bear fruit?” If we trust the story Jesus tells, we're not going to know and more than likely we're going to be very, very surprised. But here's the thing we need to know now; it is a blessing to do the work to which Jesus calls his disciples. It is a joy to be called to this work in this place. And we will be frustrated and confused and wonder on many days if any of this “works.” But I am confident that we will find our “groove,” and in faithfulness, we will get better at this work.

Thank you for your work in being the people of the Gospel for this community. Thank you for your prayers, for your offerings and for your presence in our streets. Thank you for living the ancient Gospel in a modern day.

Amen.

Pastor Erdos

St. Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23