

Sunday July 2, 2023  
Matthew 10:40-42  
(5th Sunday after Pentecost)



Ascension Lutheran Church  
Pastor Edwin Aparicio

Grace and peace from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. Let me tell you - you are lucky today! The last three weeks, the services have been an hour and a half. I promise it will be a short sermon. My daughters will tell you that when Daddy says it is a short sermon, it is guaranteed to be a super long sermon, but today I will break that trend and I will not vary from my short-written sermon.

What a way to start this new journey for my family and me. I am ordained and installed and a few days later, Pastor Chris and Pastor Tony left the continent and left me in charge of the church on my own. No chance to catch my breath. That's not it - they also took my wife! Not only does that make me a single parent at home, but at church she is my secretary and my musician! Thank you, Pastor Tony. Thank you, Pastor Chris. Uuhhh this will be a good experience without a doubt!!! However, in this new journey we are all involved as a community.

Many events have recently occurred within this building which are similar to what the gospel tells us today. Prepare to share the good news with others.

A group of foreigners recently visited our temple. A group of people from our congregation are currently in Tanzania to hear the stories of the work that God is doing in these communities.

We also had visitors from many different American ELCA churches last Sunday. All of these guests made statements about the wonderful things that are happening and the positive energy in this congregation. Some even dared to say that this Ascension community should be the model that should be practiced throughout the national church because the practice of hospitality, the practice of inclusion, the practice of love, the practice of fellowship in a multicultural environment is present among us.

Brothers and sisters, today's gospel is the culmination of a series of three Sundays that follow up on the instructions that Jesus offers the 12 disciples before sending them to proclaim that the kingdom of heaven has come near. Three Sundays ago, we heard that Jesus gave the disciples power to heal the sick, cleanse the leper, raise the dead, and cast out demons.

Within the same instructions Jesus also tells them, "Keep in mind that I am sending you like sheep in the midst of wolves" and for the simple fact of being my disciples this will bring you certain tribulations, but do not worry.

After delivering a prediction of the difficulties that were to come in their mission, Jesus wants to also strengthen the spirits of his 12 disciples by telling them "He who receives you, receives me; and whoever receives me, he receives the one who sent me. Jesus wanted his disciples to understand that in every step they were going to take he would always be accompanying them. They were not going to be sent alone on said mission to make God's grace known to others. To summarize - Jesus tells them "You can do it!"

Christians are called to advance the kingdom of God in a strange and hostile world. We are the church, we are the body of Christ and the service of each one of us is necessary to continue with the work that God is already doing in the world.

Our Lord reminds us that each one of us represents him and symbolizes him before others because he dwells in us. The apostle Paul in First Corinthians 3:16 says, "Don't you know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" He lives in us, but he also lives in everyone else. Jesus tells us all the time that he himself is present in our lives when we welcome others among us, but he is also present when others do the same for us.

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When we allow others to do things for us, we allow them to express God's love for us. Sometimes our pride prevents us from being humble enough for us to make space to receive God's love from others. I had to put this into practice this past week when we were too busy with the delegation from El Salvador to take care of our yard. Ron and Andrew Marien put God's love into the world by coming over to our house and mowing our grass for me! I had to be willing to admit I couldn't handle it on my own. Our neighbors, and especially my wife, all appreciated their act of kindness.

Jesus is in constant movement because he dwells in us. Jesus is in our homes, at church, at school, at work, at sports practices, at the park, at the store, etc. When we offer and receive hospitality, Jesus makes himself present.

The German theologian Bonhoeffer says, "The bearers of the word of Jesus receive a final word of promise for their work. After having received the instructions, they become co-workers with Christ."

As we continue this journey, we continue to open our minds, our hearts and our lives to the ways Jesus calls us. Let the light of Christ that dwells in each one of us continue to guide our lives in this mission of proclaiming the kingdom of God to those who have not yet known it. May the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with each one of us.