



9th Sunday after Pentecost
21 July 2024

Ascension Lutheran Church
Rev. Edwin Aparicio

Grace and peace from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ Amen.

A few days ago, as you all already know, leaders and youth traveled to the 2024 ELCA national meeting in New Orleans! We just returned a few hours ago in the early hours of the morning. In the coming days, you will hear directly from the mouths of our young people and our leaders about their experiences at the Gathering. Today is not that day since they all get to sleep in. That means that today is my turn to share my experience with you! If you're wondering how I'm going to do it, don't worry, here I have a cup of coffee to help me stay on my feet.

For now, let me tell you with this video my experience from last week...

Two Sundays ago, we heard the story of how Jesus returned to his hometown of Nazareth, and how he made the decision to go to the synagogue in his town so that his own people could also receive the message of Love, Joy, Peace and Hope. The surprising thing was that his own people despised his message. Despite his disbelief, Jesus continued touring the villages around his hometown to continue proclaiming the good news he had brought.

After that journey and with the intention of spreading his message further in the villages, Jesus made the decision to send his disciples two by two to share his message of hope and love. After his instructions, the disciples begin to carry out the work that he had entrusted to them - healing the sick and sharing the message of the Good News.

And in today's gospel, we hear the story of how the disciples, after having had their missionary experience, returned to the place where Jesus was and met with him to share with him their experience about what they had done and how they had taught. They were probably as tired as the Youth Gathering participants are returning to homes all over the US this morning.

The gospel of Mark does not tell us the stories that the disciples shared with Jesus. I am 100% sure that each of their stories reflected the presence of the power of the Holy Spirit. That same presence was felt last week in New Orleans, where thousands of high school students from across the country gathered to learn and grow in faith. Wonderful moments where young people and leaders felt the presence of God.

God's presence was felt during the multicultural event, during the event called the table, during the young adult event, in the songs of the thousands of students during the massive meeting, in their songs in the streets of New Orleans along the way. Back at the hotel, in our time exploring New Orleans, in our daily reflection time at the end of the day, leaders, pastors and youth dancing together. And in the leaders and their pastor, who were very tired, but still trying to live the moments with the students.

Just as God was present in his mission with the disciples, just as God was present with the young people of New Orleans, God has been present, is present and will continue to be present in the lives of each of us. And sharing this experience with others is the call that God makes to all of us so that others can experience the message of the good news that gives us Love, Joy, Peace and above all Hope. May the grace and peace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ be with each of us.