



Third Sunday after Pentecost  
14 June 2026

Ascension Lutheran Church  
Rev. Christian Marien

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

It seems to me, that we are always anticipating what might happen next in this life. Some things we anticipate with joy – at other times, our anticipation is measured with anxiety, fear of the unknown, and a solid degree of dread. Just ask any parent preparing for this first full week after the last day of school last week. Our JOLT students leave for Adventure Camp tomorrow. There will be rock climbing and ziplining and inflatables a plenty to climb at the Land of Natura. Though I think Adventure Camp is exciting, if it is your first time or you already know the challenge of looking up a 50-foot rock wall – well, the anticipation might be too much to take all at once. CRASH students are preparing for a weeklong mission experience to North Carolina. There are new friends to meet, new experiences to enjoy, new places and foods to eat, new roommate situations – and I wonder if the anticipation might be too much to take all at once. Our mission delegation to Tanzania meets today to tie up the loose ends in preparation for travel at the end of July. There are shots for yellow fever and malaria pills a plenty and riverbeds that double as roads and goat's milk boiled for your tea and poverty like most of us have never seen and joy and faith like most of us have never seen and I wonder if the anticipation might be too much to take all at once.

Pastor Tony begins his sabbatical in just two weeks. There will be airplane rides across the Atlantic and one hundred mile run hikes and Tour de France stages and croissants and chocolat and cafes and gondola rides up mountains and paragliding and a tour of Italy and Zurich and a full Ironman triathlon at the end of it all and I wonder if the anticipation might be too much. And for all of you left behind – you will suffer through the longer sermons of Pastor Chris and the lack of the word sheep used by Pastor Edwin for the next three months and I wonder if the anticipation might be too much to take all at once. No, it is no longer true, if it has ever been true, that the summer seasons of Ascension are a slower pace – after several summers – the anticipation tells us that there is great adventure for the people of God – it just comes to us in different forms and rhythms in these summer months. I wonder in your own lives, do you sense the same anticipation of summer. When children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and neighbor kids take up residence outside your front door or inside your home. What do you anticipate in the days ahead? Rest. Renewal. Renovation. Reorganization. Rededication. Restoration. Retirement. Reformation. Rehabilitation. That is all the R words I could come up with. Is it anticipation you welcome or does it look like it might overwhelm you for the expected, but unknown, outcome?

Today, there is anticipation, that might be too much, for the disciples as well. Today is one of the few times where their names are remembered in total. Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him. They have been gathered, instructed, and are now, according to Jesus, ready to be sent out in the world. The message is very simple: the power and presence of God is alive, near you, around you and in you. However, the job description is daunting: *As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.'* No problem, Jesus. But Jesus is not done. *Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons.* Wait a minute, hey Jesus, can we go over that list again.

It's not like the disciples have not seen Jesus do all those things. In the first 8 chapters of Matthew alone, the disciples saw Jesus heal Peter's mother-in-law, the paralytic lowered through the roof, and the centurion's slave. The disciples saw Jesus raise Jairus' daughter from the dead. The disciples saw Jesus cleanse the man with leprosy. And casting out demons was done by Jesus more than once – first in Capernaum and then when the disciples watched as Jesus sent the legion of demons into the herd of pigs in the region of the Gerasenes. It's not like Jesus was sending the disciples out without any experience in healing, resurrection, cleansing, and casting out – the disciples just have to trust in Jesus more than they doubt in themselves. Hear that again – the disciples just had to trust in Jesus more than they doubt in themselves.

In a world that can be hard and scary sometimes, it is tempting to think of the church as a hideout, the place where those of us who know the password can gather to celebrate our good fortune. We repeat our favorite



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stories and eat the food that has been prepared for us, it is easy to think of ourselves as consumers of God's love, chosen people who have been given more good gifts than we can open at one sitting: healing, forgiveness, restoration, resurrection. Then one day the Holy Spirit comes knocking at the door, reminding us that it is time to share. We are not to be consumers after all, but providers of God's love, authorized agents sent out to speak and act in Christ's name. Next to the calling of the disciples, Matthew's story about their sending out may be one of the most confrontational stories in the entire Bible.

Can you imagine for a moment? There you are perfectly content to be followers, when Jesus comes home all worn out one day with his hair hanging in his face and his clothes ringed with sweat and dirt. He looks around at those of us who have been with him all along and says, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. I need some help, and I'm nominating you. Then he holds out his hands over our heads and says a prayer that travels down our backbones like a chill, giving us all authority over demons, over disease—even over death—and when he has finished, we open our eyes and look at each other to see if we can tell any difference. It might be easier to reach out and poke the person sitting next to you – do they feel any different? Next, we take a deep breath to test whether anything has changed inside. Do we feel wiser, stronger, more capable? Nope. Just blessed, sort of. Just tingly and curious and well, ready—not for anything, just generally ready for whatever is next. And maybe, just maybe there is anticipation – enough anticipation to cause us to pause to wonder if it is too much.

The question is not one of anticipation. The question is one of excitement for our anticipation. When Jesus gathers the disciples – and he tells them this: tell the good news; the kingdom of heaven has come near; cure the sick; raise the dead; cleanse the leper; cast out the demon. Does it excite you? To hear the instructions Jesus offered to the disciples – to us. What power is given? What power we already possess. That wherever we go – up mountains and on ziplines – to North Carolina and Tanzania – to France and Zurich and Italy and in the midst of triathletes aplenty - there is good news to share. And in front of your house; in the midst of the tears of teachers at Hawthorne; with our Latino members who struggle to go about their daily lives; in the struggle to be in relationship with someone you love who you no longer recognize for the gaping division between you and them on one side of the aisle or another; for the loss of dignity and humanity once seen in the person who is hungry or homeless or Ukrainian or Palestinian; for a country that is in desperate need of a message of hope where all are invited to rise together without subjugation or surrender of the other – there is good news to share. In the presence of Jesus – in the presence of each of us, who follow Jesus, the Kingdom of God comes near. By the power of Jesus, we are the ones God calls to be present with the sick, speak resurrection in the face of death, call out the evil in the world that the love of God might enter into spaces once overwhelmed with despair. We are not simply consumers of God's love – we are providers of God's love – prophets, peacemakers, physicians, proclaimers of the power of God alive in the world. Is it too much for you? The anticipation of all that God calls you to do – to be about – as disciples sent into the world? Then start with one. One person, one moment, one meeting that leads you to another. Anticipate that one meeting - that one moment – that one person with just enough excitement to lead you forward. My friends, I fully expect – God will take care of the rest. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever, world without end. Amen.