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“Where Is God Sending You?”

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Focus Statement: God is sending us into His harvest.

Function Statement: That the hearers may actively serve God where they currently are.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

When Pastor Puls first told me that I would be preaching on this text I immediately thought that it was a very appropriate text to be preaching on, since I have just finished my first week here at Hope. After all this text is about sending, Jesus sending out 72 others, and I have just been sent here to Hope. Now Jesus Himself did not directly speak to me and tell me where my vicarage would be, but the seminary did. Just couple months ago my wife and I had no idea where we would be spending this next year and now, we have been sent to this wonderful congregation in Wake Forest, a brand-new place to both of us. And having received this sermon text before we began packing, Kelsey and I decided to follow the example of the 72 and we carried no moneybag, knapsack, or sandals on our way out here. We just hopped in the car and started driving. If only it were that easy.

We did pack up our car, two of them actually, along with a 6 x 12 Uhaul and we made it out here safe and sound. As I was making that drive, a total of 16 hours on the road, I was able to think about those 72 and the travels that they went on, the travels that Jesus *sent* them on. They were told to go into every town and place that Jesus Himself was about to go to. They were paving the way for Jesus and His ministry on His way to Jerusalem. They were going into towns that they most likely had never visited before. Towns that very well might be hostile to the message that they were bringing. In fact, Jesus tells them that they will be going into hostile areas, like sheep among wolves. Not only that but

they were told not to bring a thing. Unlike Kelsey and I they brought no money bag, knapsack, or sandals. Sounds like quite the vacation doesn't it? Yet they went. They went healing the sick and telling others that the kingdom of God has come near. They went because Jesus sent them and He gave them simple, but exact instructions on what they must do.

As we read this text a question comes to mind, "where is God sending me?" or even, "where has God sent me?". For some of us the answer to that question can be easy. Personally, I know that I have been sent to Hope Lutheran Church in Wake Forest, North Carolina, I even have an office and placement documents to make it official. But for others of us, this question can be a little more difficult, even uncomfortable. Maybe you're in between jobs, a stay-at-home parent, or a retiree. Maybe you're at a job that you flat out don't like, and you feel like God is sending you elsewhere or at the least you want God to send you elsewhere.

In verse two of our text, we read how Jesus began to instruct the 72 on their sending. "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." As we think about where God is sending us, there is a lot that we can glean from this verse. First we must acknowledge that we are the laborers. We are the laborers that have been sent into the Lord's harvest to do His work. Because we have already been sent.

In our baptism, God saved us from sin, death, and the devil and made us His own. He gave us the gift of faith and forgiveness, equipping us to do His work. We have all be equipped to labor in the harvest fields of our Lord, to join Him on His mission. This is not a personal mission that we made up all on our own. This is not something that the Church has made up just to give you something to do. This is Jesus' invitation, His command, to join Him on His mission to spread the love of our Father.

So where does the mission take place, where is the harvest field that we are called to labor in? Sometimes we think that in order to be sent we have to go somewhere far away. A week ago Friday,

when Kelsey and I first pulled up to the church, a group of the youth were just getting back from a mission trip in Virginia and you guys go on many other mission trips here at Hope. You go throughout your own state of North Carolina, you go to Jacksonville and Puerto Rico and many other places and that is amazing. You certainly are sent to these places to labor in the Lord's harvest, but you don't have to travel far in order to be sent. God is using you where you are right now. You are already in the harvest. We have been sent to serve in our current work places and homes, we have even been sent to serve in this church.

But what does that look like? If God has sent us to where we already are how should we serve Him? What should we be doing? Well, Jesus gave the 72 some pretty simple instructions. He told them to heal the sick and proclaim that the kingdom of God has come near. That sounds easy enough right? Go out and heal people, go out and tell them that the end is near. Be that guy on the street corner with a sign and a loud voice warning others of the wrath of God. Not exactly. God may not use us to heal others with a touch of our hand and He certainly isn't asking us to shove His Word in people's faces, but we are still sent to heal and proclaim the Gospel.

Not all of us are doctors that God uses to literally heal, but we all have people in our lives that are sick and hurting. We don't have to think very hard to find the person in our life that needs to hear and see the love of our risen Christ. God has placed people in our lives, He has put people in our way that He is sending us to, that He has already sent us to.

It may be a coworker in the office next to yours. It could be the person that runs on the treadmill in your gym, or even your brother or sister that sits in the pew across from you here at Hope. God puts people in our lives so that we may serve them and we don't have to go that far out of our way in order to do what God has made us to do. Remember, God has made us His people in order to serve. Our God is a saving and sending God and we are saved and sent people.

But we are not sent empty handed. God equips us for the work that He sets before us, He equips us for His harvest. We are called to rely on Him just as the 72 had to rely on Him. Remember that when those 72 were sent Jesus instructed them not to bring anything with them. They were left at the mercy of their sending and equipping God, relying on Him to provide them with a place to sleep and food to eat. And we know that he provided for them because we read in verse 17 that they returned with joy.

God equips us in a slightly different way than He did those 72. He certainly provides us with a place to sleep and food to eat. But God still equips us to serve in His harvest.

God equips us through His Word and the sacraments. In baptism we were given the gift of the Holy Spirit who continually works through us to serve those people that God has put in our way. We are given the gift of faith in our baptism and that faith is strengthened through Christ's body and blood. And God has also given us His Word so that we may grow in our relationship with Him as He strengthens our faith. It is our faith that propels us to serve others in the places that God has sent us. But we do not create faith in others, we do not make the Gospel work. That job is for the Holy Spirit. We are simply sent to love those that God has put in our way.

Take the example of someone offering a runner some water at a marathon or half-marathon. Have any of you ever participated in one of these events? My dad is an avid half-marathon runner and I had the opportunity to watch him run his 17th half-marathon just a week before we moved out here. At any of these races there are aid stations every three miles or so. At these aid stations there are volunteers handing out bananas, oranges, and of course water. When a volunteer is handing out water what do they do with it? Do they instruct the runner on how use the water? Do they chase after the runner yelling at them, "Hey drink this right now, you're looking awfully thirsty!" No that would be absurd. They simply hold out the water and let the runner use it as he wishes.

The same is true with how we love those that God has put around us. All God has called us to do is hold out His love for others. We serve others by showing them God's love through our actions and our words and then the Holy Spirit goes with that runner and works through that love to create faith. All we are called to do is love.

We are called to love, we are sent to love, because our Savior first loved us. We love those that God has put in our way because our Savior showed us more love than we could ever imagine, more than we ever deserve. Our Savior loves us so much that He sacrificed His life for us. He died on that cross so that we might join Him in heaven, so that we might be with Him for eternity. Your Savior took all your sin upon Himself so that you might be clean, so that you might be acceptable in God's sight. And because Christ has washed us clean and made us new we are now sent to show that love to others.

So, where has God sent you? Who has God put in your way for you to serve? I challenge you to think about that this week. You are a saved, sent, and equipped people, serving a saving, sending, and equipping Lord. Use that love that God has given you to serve those that God has put in your way.

Amen