

**Matthew 9:35-10:8** Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."

And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him.

These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.

A little over a week ago, the weather was really nice and Vanessa really wanted to get outside. I told her that sounded like a good idea and we should go fishing, but of course I told her I had to finish my to do list for the day first. Well of course it was around 6pm before I was ready to go and then of course Kaylee needed to eat. So now then it was close to 7pm. By the time we got the license, dug out all the fishing equipment, loaded up the car, stop to by some bait, made it out to the lake, we just knew there wouldn't be time. So instead let's just go hiking. So we went up to Ripon and on the south side of Ripon is the South Woods, they had some interesting hiking trails there. And they are all colored coded. So great you just follow the blue path to the green path to the red/yellow path which takes you back to the parking lot. And all you have to do to know which path you are on is watch the trees. Should be super easy right? Well we followed the blue to the green and the green to the red. We got to the red and took a right and just like that we were lost. We didn't realize it. But that one decision to go right instead of left, which we did without even thinking about it, took us in the wrong direction. And as the sun was setting the path petered out. Vanessa kept asking are you sure this is path, and I kept saying, how could it not be there wasn't any branches or turns. Untilled the path was gone and we were pushing our way through bushes and thorns with Kaylee in the Baby Bjorn.

It's easy to get lost in the words if you aren't paying really close attention. As easy as it is to get lost in the woods, its far easier to get lost in life. To take one step away from God's word and slowly veer off until you can't even find your way back.

Jesus looks at the crowds of people in his day, and says they are like sheep wandering around bumping into one another, falling into ravines, being eaten by wolves, having no idea where they were going. When you stop to think about it that is a rather remarkable statement. Because these were Israelites. These weren't Greeks or Romans. These were Israelites, God's own chosen people. They had God's word and they followed it meticulously. These were the people who sacrificed yearly in the temple. And yet Jesus says they are lost. The Pharisees who did every little command that Jesus gave them. And yet Jesus says they were white washed sepulchers. The Sadducees who were descendants of Aaron, who were some of the best educated people in the world, and yet didn't believe in life after death.

This one comment of Jesus' should chill us to our bones. It really should because if these Israelites were "lost sheep," what makes us think that we aren't lost? And if we aren't right now, how long will it be until we are?

How easy is it to take a wrong turn? Remember King David? One look, one moment of lust, and he fell. He fell hard.

Or consider Romans 14:15:

**Romans 14:15** For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died.

Consider what Paul is saying there. If you eat meat, and maybe you don't even know you are seen doing it, and your brother sees you and is offended, he could lose his faith and die eternally. That is how easy it is to misstep, and either lose your faith or cause someone else to.

I just heard about a survey that was discussing young people who grow up in a church but then fall away when they go to college. And the number one reason given was because they claim their churches are so hypocritical. They hear the pastor preach about love and yet the people in their church do not love. They hear the pastor preach against gossip and yet they hear their parents gossiping.

Sometimes we talk about the narrow way, or the narrow road. But I tell you it's not narrow, it's a knife blade, it's a tight rope. And Satan comes and he pushes us and as we are trying to regain our balance he pushes on the other side, and he keeps pushing until we fall one way or another.

What is the solution? What is it that saved David? Nathan, the Lord sent Nathan the prophet. And Nathan the prophet confronted David with his sin and with the true word of God. And through that Word the Lord brought David to repentance. And he brought him back onto the narrow path.

This is what Jesus talks about in our text as well. He looks and sees the crowds and he sees that they are lost and wandering, and what is the solution? “Pray that the lord of the harvest would send forth laborers into HIS harvest.”

The only solution for wandering sheep is a shepherd who diligently studies and correctly teaches the word of God. And such shepherds do not come from the will of men, they come only from the Lord. Our help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth.

And Jesus himself does pray. Matthew doesn't mention this but both Mark and Luke do. After telling the disciples to pray that the Lord would send workers, Jesus himself goes up into the mountain to pray. He spends the whole night there and comes down and chooses the twelve. Not that He chose them but that the Father chose them through Him.

This is what we call the Divine Call. And when we say the divine call we mean that the ministry of the Word is not ours to choose. It is not our right to choose such a ministry for ourselves, and it is not our right to choose who will be such a minister to us. But rather we pray that the Lord would send to us those who will minister the word to us. And yes this includes the Pastor, but also our teachers and our Sunday school teachers and our elders and our VBS teachers, any whose job it is to teach the Gospel of the kingdom, to us or our kids.

And having received such faithful ministers of the Word, pray that the Lord would continue to keep them faithful. It is all too easy for myself to think I know what I'm doing and saying, and then to take the wrong turn. Think back to how Vanessa and I got lost in the woods. What I should have done is to take a picture of that map and every intersection, every turn consulted the map, “is this the right way to go?” But I thought that I knew the way and hence lead all three of us deep into the woods.

To often you also think you know the way. And you think you don't need to consult the map. Faith Lutheran church has almost three hundred members, yet how many are here today? Maybe eighty? Why? Because so many of you think you already know it all. And if we were to have bible class today, how many of you would come? Maybe 15 or 20? Because you think you know it all, and you think you've heard it all before. You think you know the right path to take. “Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.”

In general the Lord has given to you faithful ministers who confront you with your sin as Nathan confronted David with his, and yet you despise this gift from the Lord.

I was just at pastoral conference, and a lot of time people complain about pastoral conference and convention saying, “ohh you pastors are always arguing over the silliest tiniest minutia of doctrine.” You know what they are arguing over in the Methodist churches? Whether it's okay to ordain a transgender woman who self identifies as nothing. She claims she is neither male or female. We should probably thank the Lord that we have such faithful pastors that they argue over the fine points of the Joint

Statement, knowing that the smallest wrong step can easily lead us far afield from God's word. Granted we should learn how to do it with more love and understanding, and less bitterness and accusations.

The Lord spent the night in prayer and then sent out the twelve. He sent them out with the power to heal and to cast out demons, but above everything to preach the "Gospel of the Kingdom." The message that the kingdom is at hand, that it is fact very near, and that the doors to the kingdom are wide open. All of you may enter and may rejoice in Jesus, because your sins are forgiven.

It is so important that the Lord provides us with ministers who confront us with our sin, because only through repentance comes the "Gospel of the kingdom." We need to be told that we are the wrong path before we know to get back on the right one.

We need to be told:

**1 Corinthians 6:9-10** <sup>9</sup> Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, <sup>10</sup> nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

Before we can hear

<sup>11</sup> And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

When David fell into sin, away from God, he was saved by such a faithful minister. Who confronted him with His sin, but then when David repented spoke the Gospel of the Kingdom: **"The Lord also has put away your sin, you shall not die." ( 2 Sam 12:13 )**

May the Lord of the harvest send and keep such ministers among us as well. Our help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

**AMEN**

**The peace of God that surpasses all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.**