

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen

Most of you know that before I went to the seminary to become a pastor, I worked in defense work.

- I worked on an Army installation that in the later years I worked there became a deployment center for some of our military troops.
- The troops being deployed would be bussed in for final processing and then from there would be bussed back out for deployment.

Now the installation I worked on was on an island in the middle of the Mississippi River.

- And there was one main road that ran down the middle of the installation that everything branched off of.
- The installation had quite a history during the civil war and the road that ran down the middle of the installation was called Rodman Avenue.....
- After the Union Army officer noted for his many improvements and innovations concerning the artillery used by the Union forces.

If you went down Rodman Avenue a large portion of it had large stone buildings used for both office space and for manufacturing

- On days that units were deploying we would get the word that at such and such a time a unit would be shipping out.
- They would leave on buses driving down Rodman Avenue to get off the base.
- We would be given notice of the time they would be coming by, and at that time we would all go out, line the street, and cheer and shout encouragement to the troops as they came by.
- Rodman Avenue would be completely lined with people.
- A brief ceremonial moment, but it was quite a sendoff. Encouragement is important.

Usually there would be 3 or 4 buses with the bus windows open for the troops to look out and for us to see them.

- As we did this, I would always be amazed at the varied reactions of the troops.
- Some, deadpan, stoic; just sitting there. No visible reaction.
- Some would be excited for the moment. Taking it all in, many of them recording the event on their phones.

Some looked fearful/timid.

- You could see it on their faces.
- Afraid. Uncertain of what lied ahead.

And others would be bold, confident, aggressive.

- They would be shouting/cheering back to us.
- Fist shaking saying, “I’m ready to go.”
- Reactions and emotions ran the full spectrum.

Our Gospel reading for today is about being sent.

- And it may seem far fetched to compare Christ sending His disciples, Christ sending you and me today, to a military unit being deployed for combat.
- But I think it is not.

We are workers in God’s Kingdom.

- And it is a tough, bloody battle.
- Ephesians chapter 6 verse 12 tells us that we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over the present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

And it is bloody.

- Ask the first disciples sent in our Gospel reading today.
- And look ultimately to the cross where the blood of Christ was shed for our salvation. For our victory.
- And make no mistake, this Jesus willingly came; but He also was sent by God our Father to do the work for which He sent Him.

And so, we are sent.

- And the reaction from the original 12 disciples and us kingdom workers today may be similar to and just as varied as the soldiers being deployed down Rodman Avenue.
- But Jesus spoke to and sent His disciples. And He speaks to us and sends us today.

It is interesting what happened just ahead of Jesus sending the 12.

- Jesus had performed miracles.
- And the reactions were also quite varied of those that observed this. Just like the reactions to Jesus today are also quite varied.

Some acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah.

- Some denied that this Jesus is the Messiah.

And the Pharisees, the church leaders, the ones in charge.....

- They were in denial.
- They thought THEY knew the TRUTH and they did not believe in Jesus.
- The spiritual powers of satan had power over them.

It is no different in our world today.

- And Jesus lamented over them.
- Jesus had love and compassion on the people.
- And He said the harvest is ready but the workers are few.

The opportunities and needs were there and they were great.

- The people were influenced and being led by false teaching.
- Just like people influence by worldly ways and false teachings today.
- People desperately in need of the TRUTH.

And using the analogy of a harvest, do not think that this is not continuous.

- There are different crops to be harvested throughout the year.
- The harvest is plentiful.

And Jesus is very clear in our Gospel reading that the battle will be tough. Jesus says.....

- Because of your belief and calling.....even your own family may go against you.
- And you will be persecuted.
- And you will be rejected.
- And at times you will wonder if you are doing any good.
- And you will wonder if it is worth it.

But Jesus also gives instruction and promises to be with you.

- So again today, Jesus is sending you.
- How do you react?
- The reactions may be just as varied as troops heading down Rodman Avenue being deployed for battle.

When we lined the streets of Rodman Avenue some of the soldiers would seem indifferent.

- Could you fit into this category?

- Just hear the word “evangelism” or being sent; and you tune out of the message and the calling Jesus has for you.

If you at all fit into this category, please do not.

- Jesus has much to say to each of us today.
- And He has an important mission for each of us.
- He has given each of us talents and opportunities for us to be sent/to serve Him.

And what are some of those opportunities? What does this look like?

- It is following in Jesus’ footsteps and what He has taught us.
- It is showing compassion and caring for others.
- It is loving and forgiving.
- It is proclaiming Christ’s name and His Word in words and actions.
- It is as simple as telling someone about your church and inviting them to join us.
- And it is most effective when it is done one on one with the opportunities God has given us.
- Jesus tells us, “The one who hears you hears Me, and the one who rejects you, rejects Me, and the one who rejects Me, rejects Him who sent Me.” Luke 10:16

And He has given us many opportunities.

- Think about the opportunities you have had this past week.
- Think about the opportunities missed.
- And it doesn’t have to be just in words. It may also be in actions.

So far I have focused on specific, individual opportunities.

- Now widen the lens to the church.
- We are looking to get our Evangelism Committee going again. Could you be a part of that in some capacity?

Today we have installation of officers for the coming year.

- Thank you to those who have served in the last year.
- And this year we have filled more positions in the past.
- But there still are vacancies. Could you maybe help in some of these capacities?

There is a prominent atheist, Richard Dawkins.

- He was asked what he will do, what he will say on judgment day when he meets God face to face.

- He said, I will ask God why He hid Himself so well from me.

Well, Mr. Dawkins, God has not hidden Himself from you.

- Just even look around at creation.
- But dear fellow disciples sent by Jesus, let us not keep God hidden from any of those around us.

Some on the busses going down Rodman Avenue sat there stoic as if nothing was happening.

- Let us not be in this category.
- May we go forth as Jesus would have us to go.
- In reality, we are all members of our Evangelism Committee.

A second category of military on the bus were those taking it all in, even recording it on their phones.

- Sometimes we can be like that.
- Spectators.
- Taking it all in; but not seeing or missing the opportunities that God presents to us.

These are those who observe the numbers in church.

- Even take note of the attendance figures in the bulletin. Even comment on the sometimes low numbers of those attending.
- Reflect that they don't know where the people have gone. And would like to at least get back to where we were before COVID.
- It is important to be aware and take it all in but God has bigger plans for each of us.

Some on the busses heading for deployment are fearful.

- Maybe this is you.
- Maybe this is our biggest category.

Pastor—I can't do this. I don't know enough.

- I'll say the wrong things.
- I just don't have it in me.
- I'll help in a lot of ways but this isn't one of them.

And Jesus in our Gospel reading speaks clearly about this. He has much to say to us.

- And in fact, this idea of trusting Him and not being fearful applies to all aspects of our life.
- We should not be surprised at this.
- Really, all aspects of our life, everything we do and say is to reflect on our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Hear what Jesus says to us about fear this morning.

- “So have no fear of them.”
- And then He goes on to talk about His care for the sparrows and our worth is far more than the sparrows.

In verse 29 and following He says.....

- “Are not 2 sparrows sold for a penny. And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are numbered. Fear not for you are of more value than many sparrows.”

God is with you and will provide and protect and bless your effort.

- Our job, our metric is to proclaim His Word, it is the Holy Spirit who takes it from there. And even then, the Holy Spirit helps us in what we are to say and do.
- Actually, it can be as simple as telling your story. What God means to you and that you are saved.

The 4th and final category of those on the bus, those being sent, are those who shake their fist, emotionally symbolizing their enthusiasm. Even shouting, “LET’S GO.”

- If this is you, “Let’s go.”
- You have seen it many times I am sure. As you leave some churches or their church parking lot you will see, “You are now entering the mission field.”

But even with this group we have to be careful and on guard.

- It is easy to become discouraged. To get tired. To give up.
- It is a weapon that the enemy often uses against us.
- We can be so hard on ourselves.
- I tried, and it didn’t seem to work. I said something I now regret. I could have done better.
- And soon you are in a funk with your mind and heart.

Psalm chapter 145 tells us.....

- “The Lord upholds all those who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down.”

- “The Lord is near to all who call on Him.”

The lie in all this is that God is frustrated with you and has turned away from you.

- The truth is He never left and He never leaves.
- He picks you up when you fall. This applies for no matter how long you have been fallen.
- For you and for those you speak to.

When you call, He answers

- And just as the words we said regarding being fearful for evangelism efforts applies to all aspects of your life.....
- What I now say regarding discouragement and despair applies to not only evangelism efforts but all aspects of your life.

The Lord picks you up when you fall.

- When you call, He answers. And He knows what you need before you even call.
- He is close enough to pick you up, wipe away both the fears and tears and whisper truth in your heart.

In fact, recall the words of the Great Commission when Jesus is giving His final words to His disciples and sending.....

- “And lo I am with you always.”

Dear fellow redeemed.....

- Stay the course.
- The devil will work hard to discourage you.
- The devil will give you every excuse and tell you what didn't happen, and whisper in your ear to just give up.

Jesus calls on us to be faithful.

- That is, He does not measure our results but calls on us to do to the best of our abilities with the talents He has given us.

One final account as we bring this message to a close.....

- Bill Broadhurst was running in the Omaha, Nebraska, Pepsi 10k, a race of 6.2 miles.

- Broadhurst, who is a Christian, is slowed by a brain aneurism he suffered as a young man, leaving him partially paralyzed on the left side.
- He wanted to finish the 10k despite this obstacle. He was determined to run because Bill Rogers, his hero, was in the race that day.

Now if you don't know Bill Rogers, he is a great runner, an Olympian.

- Rogers ran the race that day in 29 minutes and 37 seconds.
- Joggers finished the race in 60 or 70 minutes.
- It would take Bill Broadhurst much longer.

As he ran, some kids didn't understand he was competing and said, "Hey mister, you missed a good race."

- As he ran, his left side got so numb he wanted to quit.
- He wanted to drop out. After two hours, the cars were back in the streets, it was getting dark on Saturday afternoon, and running through intersections became difficult.
- One policeman stopped cars to let him across; a nice lady handed him some water.
- At 2 hours and 20 minutes he said the pain was so bad and so throbbing, "I didn't want to make it; I didn't want to go on."

Then he saw the end.

- They had already taken the banner down. Broadhurst ran down the street on the sidewalk, saw the banner had gone, and his heart sank because everybody had left.
- He thought, *What's the use?* But he decided to finish. When he got to the end, out of the alleyway stepped Bill Rogers and a gang of people.
- They were waiting for him. Rogers opened his arms, welcomed Broadhurst across the finish line, and hugged him.
- And then he placed the gold medal around Broadhurst's neck, he placed the gold medal around the neck of the last runner to cross the line.
- Rogers said, "Broadhurst, you're the winner; take the gold."

Jesus does the same for us this day.

- "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life."
- Jesus, in fact, in our Gospel reading today on being sent tells us in verse 22.....
- "The one who endures to the end will be saved."
- Hear also the last words of our Gospel reading today.
- "So everyone who acknowledges Me before men, I also will acknowledge before My Father"

God is sending each of us.

- We each have opportunities.
- We each have quite a story to tell.
- Encourage one another.

In fact, in the words of our vision that we have now set in place for Hope and say often.....

- Sharing hope in the joy of Christ.
- Amen.

(Please remain seated) And now, may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

At this time we will have installation of officers. I would ask those newly elected officers to come forward to the base of the altar steps.

Having heard the Word of God we now prepare our hearts and minds to confess the words of the Nicene Creed as found on page 158 in your hymnal.