

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

Our Scripture readings, in particular our Gospel readings for the last 2 weeks and today may be a little tough to hear about; and even preach about on a continuous basis.

- Today we end what our Gospel reading for 3 weeks has covered and is called Jesus' missionary discourse.
- It is about Jesus sending the original 12 disciples, and on in succession, you and I, to be missionaries.

Say the word evangelism and being sent and it can be a challenge for some to embrace and faithfully listen to and take in.

- And as Jesus prepares us for this mission and tells us about it, He tells us directly what it will be like.....
- And when we hear what He has to say, that doesn't exactly draw us in to embrace it.

Remember what we heard last week.....

- We will be persecuted. We will be rejected.
- Family members will turn against family members.
- And at times you will wonder if it is worth it and if you are doing any good.

Just look back to the original 12 that were sent, and we now follow in succession; and it doesn't make it attractive or inviting.

- Jesus was sent by God the Father.
- And His earthly ministry came to a close with His bloody suffering and death by crucifixion on the cross.

And a disciple or follower of Christ is not above his leader or master.

- Look at the original 12.
- All but John died a martyr's death and even John was exiled to the island of Patmos.

And now we are, "next up to bat," so to speak.

- The Father sent the Son.
- The Son sent the 12 disciples.....and on and on it goes.

We are Christ's disciples.

- Using a track relay team term, the baton has now been passed to us and we are to run with it and then pass it on to our offspring.....those that follow us.
- You, no matter who you are and your age, are being sent by Christ.

And today in this last section of Jesus' missionary discourse, He adds on to everything He has told us so far.

- And His first words today doesn't make it any easier. They are even on the cover of your bulletin.
- In the first verse of our Gospel reading for today He says.....
- "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on the earth. I have not come to bring peace but a sword."

What is going on? What does that mean?

- Well, I put forth to you that Jesus is telling us straight up on what we are to expect.

To be sure, Jesus did come to bring peace.

- He taught, "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God." Matthew chapter 5 verse 9.
- At Jesus' birth the angels announced, "Peace on earth."
- Jesus had told His apostles at another time that in this journey in which He was sending them, they were to bring peace.
- And in Isaiah chapter 9 verse 6 Jesus is called "The Prince of Peace."

But the peace He is talking about in those instances is an inner peace we have in Christ....no matter what we face.

- That is a peace the world does not understand.
- The world's peace is a fickle, fleeting and a fading thing.
- When you need it most, it is not there.

What Jesus is telling us here as He is sending us is straight talk.

- He is telling us we will face conflict and challenge.
- Satan will rage against us.

I can give you a very quick simple example of this just this past week.

- As you know, I do sidewalk ministry at the abortion clinic here in Granite City on Thursday mornings.

- My colleagues and I were standing on the sidewalk last Thursday.
- No interaction with anyone at that moment.
- Just standing there.

And a car drove by and as many times has happened before, we were given a one finger salute.

- And it was not intended to be a flattering salute.
- They had no idea who we were. We had no interaction with them; but they knew who we represented.

It will not be easy.

- But last week Jesus did give us a most important promise.
- We are not alone.
- Jesus will be with us every step of the way.

Jesus is always with you.

- That is so critical and important.
- Please do not lose sight of this. Both in your evangelism efforts and your life in general.
- You are never alone. You have Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

And today, as Jesus closes this missionary discourse, He piles on and gives us another big promise.

- He does this in the very last words of His missionary discourse.
- And they are the focus of our message here today.

I read to you again Jesus' last words to us on His missionary discourse.

- “And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water, because he is a disciple, truly I say to you he will by no means lose his reward.”

A lot is being said here. I break this down with 4 questions.

- Who are these little ones?
- What is the action?
- And what is the reward and how certain is it?

Who are these little ones?

- I think this verse is one of the most misunderstood verses in the Bible.
- Many people jump to the conclusion that the little ones are the children.

- Give help, give a cold drink of water to a child.
- That is good to do; but I don't think that is the focus of where Jesus is going here.

Look closely at Jesus' words.

- Whoever gives one of these little ones.....**BECAUSE HE IS A DISCIPLE.**

The missionaries, the disciples, we who are sent are the little ones.

- You and I as sent disciples are the little ones.
- Because we are vulnerable, subject to attack, and in the eyes of the world are of little or no significance.

We little ones are disciples because we have been called by Jesus to follow and learn from Him.

- Jesus recognizes that we are weak and vulnerable.
- We do not have to be superman or superwoman. And that ought to bring us comfort and confidence.
- Jesus is with us and He does all the heavy lifting.

We disciples of Jesus believe that our lives possess eternal significance.

- We go out with the prayer that others will receive us for what we truly are.
- Lay men and women who have the Word of God now fulfilled in Jesus Christ.
- Righteous ones who freely give of the righteousness we have received in Christ.

And that message we have is so powerful and important with eternal ramifications.

- In the last 3 weeks here at Hope we have laid to rest 2 of the pillars of this church.
- Their time of carrying the baton in the race is complete.
- They have passed it on to us. We are next up to bat.

And if we did not believe this message of salvation in Christ, or if it were not true—than woe to us.

- We believe and we are certain that Jerry Jostes and Jerry Lakin are now with our Lord for all eternity.
- Meditate on that for a moment. Let it sink in.

We are the little ones here that Jesus is talking about and we have such an important and powerful message to proclaim with eternal ramifications.

- You and I, as disciples, no matter our age, are the little ones in this passage.

- But it will not be easy.
- Jesus is with us but He also gives us the help of one another, which is the second part of this message.

The second part of this important verse that Jesus gives to us to close His missionary discourse is the action.

- Whoever gives these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, will by no means lose his reward.

Now, this week we have had some scorching heat.

- A cup of cold water sounds pretty good.

But what is Jesus saying here?

- Even a simple act of hospitality, to a vulnerable and persecuted little one, who has been sent and brings the Good News of Jesus.....
- Even a cup of cold water, is a sign that the salvation they have offered has been received in faith.

The person who gives the drink of cold water will by no means lose his reward.

- This is very special.
- What must be in that water.

It is caring. It is feeling the pain and needs of fellow members here at church when they are suffering.

- It is helping them.....
- Perhaps with a visit.
- Perhaps with a meal.
- Perhaps with a text or phone call.
- Perhaps with a card sent.

Notice it is a COLD drink of water.

- During Biblical times there was not refrigeration.
- Water that set very long would be warm.

For it to be cold meant going to the well and drawing up the water and taking it to the person.

- It can be a simple act.
- But it needs to be a heartfelt act.

What else is in the water? Encouragement.

- How much a gesture, a kind word can help a fellow disciple. A little one.

When we had the committal service for Jerry Lakin on Wednesday.....

- At the cemetery it was warm. The sun was beating down.
- At the end of the service, one of the family members went over to their vehicle, reached into their cooler and brought me back literally a cold bottle of water.
- I had not yet prepared this sermon but it was literally a cold drink of water.

I didn't realize how thirsty I was but it was quite refreshing.

- Refreshing yes. But the gesture and support lasting long beyond that.
- Even to be included in this message.

Now compare this to what I mentioned happened on Thursday on the sidewalk.

- Another gesture.
- A gesture of rebellion.

It is not easy.

- We all need from time to time that cold drink of water. That encouragement.
- Literally or figuratively.

What else is in the water?

- Love.
- Christian love that covers over all of this.
- The love, the care, the concern, the desire and encouragement to be in step, hand in hand on this journey to our eternal home.
- And not just us but others with us.

And the last 2 points to consider from what Jesus tells us to close out His missionary discourse, is what is the reward and how certain is it?

- Consider the certainty of the reward that Jesus promises to us.
- Jesus says the one giving the cold drink of water will by no means lose his reward.

The reward here and in this context and the original Greek refers to salvation, that is resurrection on the Last Day to eternal life with Jesus in the company of all believers.

- And those 3 words, “by no means” are often used in the Bible.
- It is another way of saying “he will certainly not lose.”

Jesus’ words here promise that just as a faithful disciple will be saved on the Last Day, so also those who in faith receive the disciple and his message will be saved.

- And sometimes you can be the one receiving the cold drink of water and sometimes you are the one giving it.

Being sent is not easy.

- So difficult we often don’t even want to talk about it.
- But no calling is more blessed than to be a proclaimer of the Good News.
- Let each of us today be encouraged by the words of our Master.
- Let each of us receive encouragement and give encouragement one to another in very great and very small ways.

Being sent is not easy.

- But we are not alone.
- Jesus is with you.
- And we are with one another as we make that journey to our eternal home and have others join us along the way.

We have such an important and vital message with eternal ramifications to proclaim in Christ.

- Today we hear that we are to share the encouragement and support and love and care, one to another.
- In fact, we are sharing hope in the joy of Christ.
- Amen.

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

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 206 in your hymnal.