

Trinity UMC, Iron Mountain, MI
Sunday Worship 2nd Sunday after Pentecost June 7, 2020
Pastor Geri Hamlen

Today is the 2nd Sunday after the Pentecost celebration. Those of you who have been here every Sunday know that we have been having one Special Sunday after another...Mother's Day, Graduation Sunday, Ascension Sunday, Pentecost, Trinity. Something Special each week to remember, to celebrate, to ponder. So this Sunday, what's special is that it's an Ordinary Sunday.

We are in what some traditions call Ordinary Time. Through the summer and into the late fall we will be together in the Season of Pentecost which is our chance to think about how God, through Jesus, by the Holy Spirit, this Trinity God is with us in our everyday, ordinary lives. To provide us with Purpose. To share Presence. And to offer us the Power and strength we need to be the People of God who are and do what God made us to be.

Hear the blessing:

Let us pray Opening Prayer: 15th c. Giordano Savonarola, Italy amended

Lord, we give thanks for this day and every day.

You offer us the gift of life and provide for us beauty, provision and love.

We pray this day and always, not just for tranquility

nor that our tribulations cease;

we pray this day and always for thy spirit and thy love,
that thou grant us strength and grace to overcome adversity. By the power of the Holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

During this Ordinary Time, we will be reading in the Gospel according to Matthew, the teachings, actions and adventures of Jesus. They will serve to guide us in seeing Jesus in our here and now. We are starting relatively early in his ministry. The 12 disciples have been chosen and their travels with Jesus have begun. Hear what happens next.

Scripture Reading Matthew 9:35 – 10:7

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages,

teaching in their synagogues,

and **proclaiming the good news of the kingdom,**

and curing every disease and every sickness.

*When he saw the crowds, **he had compassion for them,***

because they were harassed and helpless,

like sheep without a shepherd.

Then he said to his disciples,

“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few;

³⁸ therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority

over unclean spirits, to cast them out,

and to cure every disease and every sickness.

These are the names of the twelve apostles:

first, Simon, also known as 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.
These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions:

“Go nowhere among the Gentiles,
and enter no town of the Samaritans,
but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

**As you go, proclaim the good news,
‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’**

Message

Jesus is the Presence of God

Pastor Geri

Two things stick out to me in this part of Matthew.

First of all, I hear **how** Jesus lived in relationship with, well everyone. Verse 36

*When he saw the crowds, **Jesus had compassion for them,**
because they were harassed and helpless,
like sheep without a shepherd.*

Jesus has compassion...for them, for us.

Multiple translations: Hurting and helpless. Confused and helpless. Distressed, dispirited. Confused and aimless. Weary and scattered. Their problems were so great and they didn't know where to go for help. Sounds like the human condition in this era of COVID-19 and Racial unrest, doesn't it? And Jesus had compassion.

Compassion. It's a word that sometimes gets a bad rap now a days. You've maybe heard of compassion fatigue. Or compassion that leads to enabling. There is the perennial problem of bleeding hearts with Good intentions doing more harm than good. But let's figure that Jesus, God incarnate...did **compassion** in the best possible way. With just the right amount of understanding, empathy along with a healthy urgency for providing support and aid where needed, while letting people do for themselves what they are capable of doing and cheering them on with Holy Spirit vigor.

The compassion of Christ: That's the first thing that sticks out for me and I personally hold that dear. I don't want pity, mind you. Sympathy and empathy are fine occasionally but I really treasure the compassion of Jesus. I'm assured by that verse that my troubles are known by God and my reactions and difficulties are honored, respected. I can live with the security that Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit, is there to help me and to do for me what I can't do for myself. I live that blessed assurance—every day even. I hope it's real for you too. That's really who and how Jesus is.

The second thing I hear in today's reading is the message that Jesus carries:

Verse 35 *Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages,
teaching in their synagogues,*

*and **proclaiming the good news of the kingdom...***

Good news of a kingdom. The kingdom. God's kingdom.

That phrase is sprinkled through the various Gospels and letters of the Bible writings and would be easy to skip over except for the fact that God's kingdom shows up again at the end of the reading, verse 7, Chapter 10 when Jesus tells his disciples what to say as they were sent out. Jesus says to them: **As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.'**

Translations: And there is much less variation in the translation of this phrase than there was for the word compassion. Seven out of 8 Bible translations I read use those words: The kingdom of heaven is near, has come near, is at hand. Present tense. Here and now and as near as our hands can reach. Right here where we live and breath and grow and bear fruit and die. This is the kingdom of heaven...when we choose to see it that way.

The Kingdom of Heaven, God's kingdom on earth, is an eternal reality but yes, for God's own good reasons, God gave us the option to believe it or not. To live as kingdom dwellers, as those who bear the image of God...or to disregard that possibility altogether and to wander like sheep who are weary and scattered. And cynical and hopeless. And desperately in need of compassion.

When we believe that the Kingdom of Heaven can be a reality here and now...
When we accept the compassion of Jesus as the foundation for our lives together, amazing and wonderful things can start to happen.
Not just for us as individuals who so often feel weary and scattered, distressed and dispirited.

No, amazing and wonderful things can happen as well for us as the Unique and one of a kind Church that God intends for us to be, here at Trinity UMC. Because, yes, churches also get weary and worn out and scrambled and over-whelmed. And Jesus sees that and looks with compassion on us, has compassion for us, as a church. As a faith community that fumbles for clarity and vision.

When a group of people who call themselves the church...can bring themselves to accept the compassion of Christ and truly believe that the Kingdom of heaven is at hand in our building, amazing and wonderful things can start to happen:
That group of people starts to expect that Jesus will show up.
That group of people then starts to experience the presence of Jesus in their worship, in their committee meetings, in their planning and in their missions.

When the church accepts the compassion of Christ and believes that the Kingdom of Heaven...is at hand, is near, amazing and wonderful things can **keep** happening:
That group of people expects to hear/sense/discern the **voice of Jesus** guiding them to what they are called to be and do.
And then they experience, celebrate, embrace the presence of Jesus Christ among them. And the way forward becomes clearer. And there is excitement and energy for going in that direction, together.

When the Church experiences the compassion of Christ and lives within the framework of the Kingdom of Heaven, amazing and wonderful things **will** happen:
When that group of people expects the power of the Holy Spirit to flow through their lives and their church,
They will experience the presence of Jesus...Surely the presence of the Lord is in this Place.
They will start to live the purpose that God intends for them.
That church will become a Beloved Community that mirrors the kingdom of heaven.
That church can be a reflection on earth of what it is like in heaven.

No...I'm not talking about us creating a 'Perfect Church.' God doesn't expect that of us at all. God's hope, as told to us by Jesus, is simply that we would live with the joy and the assurance and the conviction that Jesus has compassion for the crowds and God's Holy Spirit has the power to bring heaven to us on earth.

I know that some of you may have received phone calls from the Church Unique group here at Trinity. Since April, 2019 that group has been asking God to reveal Trinity's Unique and wonderful identity. We have been wrestling with the English language to put into words what we believe is God's Mission for us and Strategies based on our values. And now we are seeking your input to see what you think...are we on the right track? Have we overlooked something important? Or elevated something irrelevant?

I give thanks to them for doing this hard, hard work and thanks to those of you who take the time to visit with them and share your sense of God's leadings for us. Jesus has compassion for this Trinity Church and we too are called to be a reflection of God's heaven right here on earth. We just need to get it into words and start living it.

The Scripture this morning reminds me that once you've had a glimpse of God's kingdom on this terribly troubled world...there is a hunger, an ache, an itch for more experiences like that. A desire For more people to hear and see the compassion of Jesus at work in this world. That experience of compassion and kingdom creates an energy for sharing the Holy Spirit power that can transform the world and the people around us.

In this coming week, as we prepare to return to this Sanctuary for worship, I invite you to look around for signs of the kingdom. Where do you see the compassion of Christ at work? What have you heard or thought or experienced that is a reflection of God's kingdom on earth? Where are the Christian fish symbols in your life?

Especially in these darker than usual day, we hav to look a little harder to see the Kingdom. I read something recently which has stuck with me. A story of God's kingdom breaking through in an Arizona state penitentiary...by someone who may or may not have known Jesus as Christ. A story of unexpected compassion in the midst of great violence. And I don't doubt that Jesus was there and the kingdom of heaven was at hand.

'The Sun' March 2020 p. 47 "Skin" (Reader's Write), Yari D. Jacobson, June 2013

Let's consider what it would be like if we all lived in the consciousness of Christ's compelling compassion, seeing God's kingdom on earth. Amen.

Pastoral Prayer

Pastor Geri

Compassionate and loving Jesus.

You feel our pain, our fear and our great wish for your love to heal the world. We don't always know what we can do...so I ask you to make yourself so clear and so understandable that we can no longer ignore your calling.

Affirm that your compassion is sufficient for all our needs and give us strength to be heaven builders in this tragic and troubled world.

Remember our friends and family who are struggling with illness, anxiety and grief.

We pray for those who continue to heal from the COVID virus as well as for the families of those who have died from it.

We pray as well for the care-givers that they may remain vigilant and creative in their treatment of everyone in need of medical care.

We pray for the leaders of the nations, the states, the counties who have tough decisions to make.

Be with your UMC as we continue to seek out your will on so many issues that are being delayed during this time of pandemic. There is something of your will and intention in slowing us down...giving us time and space to think, to pray, to come to terms with your will in this and all things. **Lord's Prayer**

Benediction Romans 5: 1 – 5 *The Message*

Continue to shout your praise of God, even when hemmed in with troubles, because we have been assured that in Christ, troubles can develop passionate patience in us,

 and that patience in turn forges the tempered steel of virtue,
 keeping us alert for whatever God will do next.

In alert expectancy such as this, we're never left feeling shortchanged.

Quite the contrary—we can't round up enough containers
 to hold everything God generously pours into our lives
 through the Holy Spirit! Go in peace....

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Go in peace to serve God and your neighbors, looking always for the Presence of Jesus all around us!