

The Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time July 11, 2021

Today we learn what it means to be sent by God. We are also reminded of one of the most amazing and wonderful things about us as human beings.

In our gospel reading Jesus sends his disciples out to preach repentance. Remember they had recently been in Jesus' hometown where his own people had no respect for Jesus when he preached in the synagogue. To those in his hometown, Jesus was just a local "nobody".

Notice how Jesus prepares the disciples, telling them how they must go, out to the people. First, they go two by two. The reason for that is because they are witnessing to what Jesus taught them. For a valid testimony back in Jesus' time, two witnesses were needed. Upon seeing this, the people of the towns and villages would trust them from the start.

Then, in addition to going in pairs, Jesus instructed them to go simply. They would take no food, sack, money, or a change of clothes, just a walking stick. They were to stay where they were accepted but to leave where they were not welcomed or listened to.

Imagine what this must have felt like for the disciples. They had nothing and were dependent on the people to whom they were preaching. They wouldn't always be accepted, and if they were not accepted, they had nothing to fall back on. Still they went off, preached repentance, chased out demons, and cured many who were sick.

The prophet Amos was also sent out to prophesy. Like the disciples, he was not necessarily a trained speaker. God chose him and sent him from shepherding a flock and tree trimming. Amos was rejected and sent away from Bethel. But that did not stop him. Amos and Jesus' disciples had much in common. They were sent to prophesy to the people of their time. They did as they were told to do. They were traveling missionaries.

Did you ever wonder how they could do all this, doing what they have never done before? They didn't even have a safety net to fall back on! What does that mean for us today? We are also sent, and here is the best news of all: God has blessed us in Christ. "In love God destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ." This means we belong to God as his sons and daughters, and God chose us in Jesus before the foundation of the world.

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We have all heard this many times over the years. Perhaps it struck us as being so amazing that it is unbelievable. But it is the truth, and with this gift comes great responsibility. We will answer for it to God when our time comes. Being children of God is a grace and a responsibility. We are sent as Jesus was sent, and as his disciples were sent. We are all prophets with a mission. This means we must speak up for others when it would be easier and more comfortable to be quiet. If we are not listened to, we shake off the dust from our feet and move forward.

This should not frighten us but lift us up. Yes, we are responsible to God, but that does not mean that we all need to give up our life as we know it. It means doing what we can for others. It can mean giving money at times, but much more than that it means speaking up for the good of others as well as ourselves. It could mean talking as a family, supporting and encouraging each other. It might mean speaking a kind word or praising someone for a job well done. Being prophetic does not necessarily mean changing your life entirely and dramatically, though sometimes that happens too! Just remember that you are sent as God's son or daughter. God will never abandon you.