

Grace, Mercy, Peace are now yours from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen.

You can learn a lot about what a family thinks is important during some very stressful time crunches. For mine growing up

Packed and ready to go moments before we leave

Mom making sure others are ready to go

Dad doing everything around the house

Our Text for today is our Gospel reading as we heard read a few moments ago. Our reading is a direct continuation of the story we focused on last week. We began our reading last week as we heard these important words that shape the rest of the Gospel of Luke – Jesus has set His face towards Jerusalem. In the Gospel so far Jesus has been teaching, preaching and performing miracles in Galilee and now Jesus has made an important turn. Not just directionally as he travels to the south towards Jerusalem but also as he begins to prepare His disciples for the things they will see and experience when he gets to Jerusalem.

Jesus has begun his last journey. Jerusalem is not another destination that Jesus will move through, but it is the culmination of all things. All salvation history is tied up in this single event. Everything Jesus has done has been leading up to Jerusalem. Jesus is on a journey that ends with His passion, his death and his resurrection. For Jesus the ultimate purpose of His time on Earth is very quickly approaching. It isn't some distant or far off looming event, but as each day goes by it is becoming more and more a present reality. Time is running short. The Kingdom of

God is here, the Christ is coming, the messiah is here and His work is about to be finished. Time is running short.

This last journey of Jesus is marked with this understanding of urgency and the looming end to the ministry of Jesus. Jesus has no time to spare to prepare the disciples for what is to come and what is to be after. Every moment is devoted to the proclamation of the kingdom of God and its present reality amongst the disciples and with equipping the disciples for life in this kingdom. Last week we see Jesus contending with urgency and what others would prioritize over it. We hear sharp words from the mouth of Jesus as he encounters these men. One disciple sought to go and bury his Father first before he joined Jesus, but the urgency of Jesus mission, takes precedent. And Jesus tells the man, let the dead bury the dead, but you proclaim the kingdom of God. Another wishes to go home and say goodbye to His family before leaving to follow Jesus. Our savior offers these harsh words – No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

These final days of Jesus ministry and the people He has called to be His disciples are shaped by the urgency of Christ’s mission. Time is running short and nothing can stand in the way of what needs to be done the march to Calvary. Last week’s reading sees disciples prioritizing their own will against what Christ has called them to do. This week we see 72 of Jesus disciples sent out 2 by 2 into the world that are and shaped by this urgency. 72 go 2 by 2 out into all the towns and regions that Jesus will be traveling through on His way to Jerusalem. This kingdom of God goes out into the world and proclaims the good news of the coming Christ. They go into world few in number and as lambs among wolves. Yet they go at Christ command.

Like their master they are marked by his urgency. Jesus commands these 72 to prioritize what they have been called to. They are to downplay themselves and recognize the urgency of Christ's mission. Jesus tells them to take nothing and do nothing that would slow them down. Don't bother taking any money with you as you go, God will provide for your journey. Do not worry about what you will bring, take with you no knapsack or sandals as you walk. Do not even greet people on the road as you go. Stay in the first house you come across and proclaim to them "Peace be to this house." For those that they visit and are received the blessing from God flows out. Through the 72 healings are given and demons are cast out. The kingdom of God draws near to the ones the disciples visit.

To those that reject the disciple's message and presence in their town, Jesus commands the 72 to dust off their feet. A sign of the coming judgment against those that reject the disciples. Jesus speaks woe to those who have seen incredible things done by the hands of the 72, of His disciples and by Jesus Himself and yet reject the message they bring. For when the 72 speak and are rejected it is not, they that are rejected but Christ himself and the Father who sent him. These questions of eternity take on even greater importance with Jerusalem looming close by. Time is running short.

When these 72 return from the mission field God sent them to, they are amazed at what God has accomplished through them. The healings, casting out of evil and the proclamation of the approaching kingdom of God are amazing to behold. Empowered by Christ, the Kingdom of God, goes forth into the evil one's territory and defeats him. In Christ name evil is defeated and what was once broken becomes healed and restored. The coming kingdom of Christ brings with it restoration and life. Yet again Christ points to what is most important though, what is to be

the priority for the disciples. While these are incredible things to behold and to be a part of. Christ reminds the disciples that what is even better than witnessing these things is that they have assurance of life eternal. That despite time running short, Satan prowling like a lion to devour them, their eternity is assured. Their names are written in heaven. What a wonderful gift!

As Christians today reading and hearing this text it is an easy text to deflect and ignore. It difficult for us to imagine what it would be like to walk in the shoes of the 72 disciples sent out. To go out into the dangerous and often hostile world and to bring the message of the kingdom of God to the world. Imagine walking out of church today with nothing but the clothes on your back and walking to the next town over. You do not have our wallet; you do not have any supplies and you do not greet anyone while you are on your way. You go urgently because time is running short. Once you get to the next town over you enter the first house you come across and announce, "Peace be to this house". When they miraculously accept and feed you, could you imagine being the hands that God uses to cast out demons with and heal the sick?

For us in living in the 21st century, it is very difficult for us to even think that way. Yet like the disciples of old we too have been called to follow Jesus. We have been called into the kingdom of God by Jesus, he has called us into His church and then gives us the same sense of urgency that He gave to the 72. We are not walking with Jesus to Jerusalem. We are not waiting on Jesus' passion. Yet our time is running short. Every minute that passes us by is one closer to that great and glorious day. We await not the empty tomb, but trumpets and Christ coming to us on the clouds. Christ coming to reclaim and restore His creation. It looms unknown in the future. Today? Tomorrow? When? Christ is coming, our time is running short.

Our ancestors in the faith were called to prioritize their lives around the urgency of their calling. We are called to do the same, yet the world around pulls and pulls for their own priorities. The world would have us seek after things that really don't matter in the light of the coming Christ. We are often tempted to prioritize our material wealth. Building piles higher and higher for ourselves. Taking what God has given us to be a blessing to others as burden upon ourselves. We prioritize the things of this world over the coming kingdom of God. We can prioritize chasing good feelings and getting them at any cost. Looking to substance, relationships or even avoidance to make things feel ok. Prioritizing our comfort. We can even prioritize ourselves, putting us on a pedestal ignoring our love for neighbor and for God. While many of these are good and gifts of God like relationships and wealth, their misuse is what causes us to lose focus on our priorities.

Time is running short and as Disciples of Christ we have been called to live in view of that. What does God call us to prioritize? Are we to be like the 72? Abandoning all and traveling town to town with nothing but the shirts on our backs? God has given us a difficult calling. God has called each and every one of us to be faithful. Faithfulness has two parts, first and foremost faithfulness to God. We are called as disciples of Christ to love God with all our hearts soul and mind. In this vertical priority we center our lives around God and His word. To prioritize faithfulness to God we look to him in all things our lives conform around it. We live with the urgent reminder that He is coming again soon. And Secondly, we are to love our neighbor as our self. We are to care for those God has put around us. We prioritize this when we put others above ourselves, going outside of ourselves to lift up and care for one another. We have an urgency to love our neighbor because Christ is coming to make all things new. In the meantime,

our neighbors suffer and need our assistance. We are to care and watch over the people God has put into our lives, parents, siblings, friends, neighbor etc. Serving and loving them. We also look to share our faith with those God has put around us that they too might hear and by hearing come to faith as the Holy Spirit works through us. That they might join us with Christ on that long awaited last day.

These tasks, while they sound simple on paper are difficult in our daily lives. The cost of being a disciple is high. The world wants us to prioritize things apart from our faithfulness. The world has sold us the idea that things, feeling good and even ourselves should be our biggest priority. The struggle we have between Satan, the world and our own sinful nature makes it impossible to prioritize our life perfectly. We fail, fall and turn to the side from what God has called us to do. When we prioritize these things above Christ and His calling for us, we are not living faithfully, we fail and fall into sin. The urgent and important becomes Sunday talk and it means nothing in our lives. What is to shape and guide our day to day life, becomes nothing more than a servant to another priority. The once joyful mission of the church given to us becomes terrifying as our sin mounts before us and we remember that our time runs short.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, when we fail to live as those called by Christ we know where Jesus Jerusalem journey ends. Christ suffers and dies for the sins of the world. For your sins and my sins, For our misplaced priorities and our unfaithfulness. In his death they are destroyed and in His resurrection, we find new life. Like our ancestors before us our names are written in heaven. Through our baptisms God has called us by name to be His and we can rest assured that we are forgiven and that when Christ comes we can look forward to seeing him face to face.

The harvest is plentiful, the mission field is huge, but the workers are few. Let us ask our Heavenly Father to send us His Spirit that we might live in the excitement of Jesus return faithfully serving God and serving our neighbor. Our time is running short, Amen.