

Sermon 2008 Pentecost 5
Text: Matthew 10: 5-15
Theme: "Aim for More Failure"

The C.E.O. of IBM met with his sales managers and set a startling goal before them for the coming quarter. "Double your rate of failure." It sounds ridiculous doesn't it? Why would any C.E.O. want his sales people to fail twice as much? Ah but the key is that in order to double your rate of failure, you have to at least double your number of contacts and in so doing, you will make more sales.

It is probably dumbfounding to discover how much you would have succeeded if only you had not been afraid to try. Pastor Emery from Calvary Methodist told me a story about a member of his father's congregation. One of the choir members was a chemist for 3M and he had been set upon the task of discovering a new adhesive that would bond anything to anything permanently. These were the days when chemists were trying to discover super glue. This poor guy failed time and time again but he used his failed test strips which would stick a little but pull right off to mark his choir music. Soon everyone in the choir wanted these pieces of paper that would stick to their music

temporarily and then peel right off without damaging the sheet music. And Post-it-Notes had been invented from failure.

Only through failure did this guy invent something amazing. How many of us are frozen in fear of failure? How many of us would sooner let our neighbor go to hell than risk failing at telling him the gospel? Jesus moved through the cities and villages and saw all these people running about like helpless sheep. They went to and fro and never got anywhere and he looked at his disciples and said, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

I can picture it now. They had seen Jesus heal the sick, make the lame walk, feed thousands and now Jesus tells them to pray that the Lord of the harvest will send laborers and they are saying, "Yes Jesus! That's it! We need more laborers to gather the harvest. You've got the plan Jesus!" And then Jesus looked at them and said, "Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves," and the disciples said "huh?"

We are all for **someone** reaching the lost. We think that it

is a great idea to proclaim the Gospel. But when Jesus turns to us and says – go, we panic. Why is that? It is because we always think that proclaiming the Gospel is something we must **do**. It is not. It is something we **are**. God has already **done** everything that needs **doing**. All that is left is for us to be who we are. Jesus says,

“For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.” Now first and foremost, he was speaking to the apostles here, but by extension, it reaches all of us. You are not called to preach and teach and Baptize and administer Holy Communion, that’s me. But you are called to glorify God in everything that **you** do.

In the Old Testament reading, God said to the people through Moses,

“Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”

God has made us a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Don't be afraid to act like one who is chosen and don't get sucked in to acting like one who is not. Live your lives glorifying God and he will use those lives to draw others to him.

You don't have to go door to door and memorize difficult evangelism scripts. You simply have to be ready to give an answer for the hope that is within you and let that hope show. Don't worry about the Hindu in India, God will provide someone for him. And if this is new to you, don't start your evangelism career with the Muslims down the street or the Jehovah's Witnesses around the corner. Let the pro's handle them. Start with who the Lord has laid at your feet. Start with your children and grandchildren by doing everything in your power to get them to worship and Sunday School. Start with the lady who cleans your house or the guy who bags your groceries by being kind and loving towards them. Seek a way to **SHOW** the Gospel to your coworker by listening even when you don't want to hear any more about his difficult marriage.

Don't be afraid. YOU CANNOT FAIL if you want to because it is not you but God at work. He will take the life that glorifies him and use it to accomplish his will every time. And his will is that all people be saved. I am here to teach and Baptize and administer the Holy Supper, but you draw all people to this place to hear and see that God loves them. This is the forgiveness place. Don't keep it a secret. AMEN.