

Pentecost 3 – June 18, 2023  
Text: Matt 10:5-20  
Theme: Shaking Off the Dust

**Every pastor will tell you that of all the boards that need staffing in the Church, the Board of Evangelism is the hardest. Some of the reason for that is our own fault. In the 1970's and 80's, the LCMS decided that Evangelism was going door to door and asking people if they were saved. Sometimes Lutherans are just dumb. Just because we see the Protestants doing something does not mean it is a good idea. That nonsense came from James Kennedy's Evangelism Explosion in Coral Gables Florida. Later it was known as confrontational evangelism in which you confronted people with whether or not they were saved. Very few people wanted to be part of that. I was forced into it when I was in school because we all had to be trained in it. It was horrible and I swore I would never inflict that kind of nonsense on my congregations.**

**The next evolution of evangelism was relational evangelism. That is a step in the right direction. People were trained to form groups and discuss their faith with one another making an effort to invite people who were not connected to the church into their groups. If you were an unbeliever and a bunch of church people invited you over for coffee and pie, do you think you might smell something fishy? It was disingenuous for the most part. The only**

**aspect of it that made any sense was what we do in our homes with our own family. If you rear children to believe that there are other things more important than church and God, don't be surprised when they abandon the faith. Every human being has the power to reject God so no matter what the parent does, it might not do any good, but parents need to remember that they are frontline evangelists and children are watching everything they do. Kids are not stupid. They can easily tell what the adults in their lives think is important. It is where they spend their time. Jesus said it, "where your treasure is, there your heart will be." Wherever you focus your time and energy is what you treasure is, and if it's not Jesus and His worship, kids will notice and likely emulate the parent. Likewise, older siblings also contribute to a child's understanding of Jesus. If you are an older sibling, never underestimate how much the younger ones are watching you. That is frontline, relational evangelism at work.**

**In the LCMS today, we have finally moved to an understanding that evangelism is just being Jesus' witnesses in the world. I think that mirrors what our Lord tells us in the Gospel for today as He sends out His disciples to spread the word of salvation. It is interesting that He tells them to start with the Jews. How would that translate for us? Perhaps He would tell us to start where the**

**fields are ripe for harvest. Start in your own family, your own circle of friends, your own workplace. You don't have to go to Borneo to do mission work. Start with who you know who may be struggling in life and needs to hear good news.**

**Next Jesus tells them and us to be prepared to shake the dust from our feet. I think we are particularly bad at this one. We want to get everyone in church but Jesus warns us to be prepared to shake the dust off our feet. Some people decide that they believe a different gospel. Some people decide that they don't need the Church. Some people nurse hostility and anger and love holding a grudge against leaders of the Church and even God himself. There are all kinds of reasons people leave the Church or don't desire the Church, but if we have invited them and they refuse, it's time to shake the dust and move on to someone who wants to hear about Jesus.**

**Jesus also warns them and us that there will be wolves among the sheep. We live in a pretty safe world. I know we have the occasional violence and honestly, about 75% of the time there is any violence in Villa Park, it is people from the city who have come out here to do mischief. Normally, our big concerns are over coyotes in our backyards and drunks leaving the bars on Friday night. But the real wolves are not people we expect. The real wolves are people**

**who stir up hostility and descension in the Church quietly and secretly. They sometimes are even inside the Church (that's the definition of a hypocrite – someone who appears to have faith but secretly works against Jesus). A real wolf is anyone who works against the things of God as we know them from His Word. If he tries to elevate something above God, he is a wolf. If he tries to diminish God's people or God's house, he is a wolf. The problem with the sheep is that sometimes we are so busy looking for people who might steal our catalytic converter or spray graffiti on our garage that we miss the real wolves in the world around us. These are people who we might trust. Maybe they are teaching our kids in their schools, or occupying political offices or promoting ungodly, unscriptural ideas in our community. Those are the wolves of which we need to beware.**

**Lastly, Jesus tells them and us not to worry about what to say when we witness. That is the biggest concern you hear from anyone who is asked to witness their faith in Jesus. I wouldn't know what to say. Jesus promises us that the Spirit of the Father will speak through us. Pray for God's guidance, and then speak. You will be absolutely amazed at what the Holy Spirit can do when you get your ego out of His way. We don't know what to say! How could anyone know what to say to a person who has no faith or a person who is**

**struggling with weak faith? I cannot see their soul. I don't know what secret sins they have for which they are flogging themselves. But the Holy Spirit knows everything and Jesus promises that He will speak through you. All you have to do is open your mouth and speak. Tell that person what Jesus has done for you and what Jesus wants to do for the world and for them. He may or may not listen. Your words may be seeds that require years to grow. You might get the door slammed in your face and require some dust shaking. But none of that is your concern. You are called to open your mouth and witness. The Holy Spirit will do the rest.**

**So, evangelism is actually the easiest board on which to serve because the Holy Spirit does all the heavy lifting. All you have to do is ask, how might we witness our faith in and love for Jesus today? Who might we tell that we have not yet told? How can we show our witness as effectively as speaking it. In reality, the Board of Evangelism is the largest board of the Church because the whole congregation is on this board. All we need is a coordinator to look for opportunities to witness and to focus our witness.**