

Homily for Wednesday in the Sixth Week after Pentecost

July 8, 2020

By the Reverend Stephen Gerth

Year 2, Proper 9: Hosea 10:1–3, 7–8, 12; Psalm 105:1–7; Matthew 10:1–7

The commemoration of the early fifteenth century Czech priest and martyr Jan Hus on Monday this week meant that we did not hear the beginning of the second of the five sermons that Jesus gives in Matthew, the Sermon on Mission. We will be reading this sermon through Monday of next week. I'd like to begin today by reading yesterday's gospel. It's short, and it sets the stage for what we heard today:

*And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every infirmity. 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; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."*¹

The next words, the beginning of today's gospel, are these: "And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them

¹ Matthew 9:35–38.

out, and to heal every disease and every infirmity.”² So, the Lord of the harvest gets busy by selecting twelve to be his messengers, to “proclaim ‘that the sovereign power of heaven has drawn near.’”³

Ulrich Luz in his commentary on the Mission Sermon notes that here, at its beginning, there is a “merciful shepherd.”⁴ Very soon in this same sermon we will hear about “the Lord of judgment—the Son of Man.”⁵ In Matthew, believers walk in the light of mercy, if you will, and in the shadow of judgment.

Jesus named these twelve “apostles”—“messengers”—and charged them to take up his mission. They are to heal as he heals, to raise the dead as he raises the dead, to cleanse lepers as he cleanses lepers, and to cast out demons, as he casts out demons. At the end of today’s lesson, they learn that they are “to go to the lost sheep of Israel”⁶ and preach what Jesus preached, again, “the sovereign power of heaven is at hand.”⁷

² Matthew 10:1.

³ Matthew 10:7.

⁴ Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8–20: A Commentary*, trans. James E. Crouch, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2001), 65.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Matthew 10:6.

⁷ Matthew 10:7.

Jesus' first concern is only for Israel. Later in the gospel, his concern will extend to all people.

As this sermon begins, the words and actions of his apostles will be the words and actions of Jesus. The Good News is Jesus' Good News. For whatever reason, the English word used to translate the Greek Jesus' healing the sick, casting out demons, and raising the dead is "miracle," that is, an act of wonder. The word "miracle" is a bad translation of the Greek word from which we get the word "dynamite." Jesus' healings are acts of power.

Finally, before the Mission Sermon ends, Jesus will declare, "The one who receives you receives me, and the one who receives me receives the One who sent me."⁸ Jesus is both brother and Lord of all of us in this life and in the life of the world to come.

✠ In the Name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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⁸ Matthew 10:40.