

Assignment Day

- Mid May very exciting time for church body. In WI Synod, mid May when college & Sem both graduate their students. Of course, grad fr school always exciting; but even more: this when many students assigned to first placement in ministry. Called AD. One takes place at college for teacher candidates; another at Sem, pastoral students. What happens: special church service re ministry; hundreds gathered for worship. After sermon, Pres of WI Synod stands at podium, reads all asgmts made by asgmt cmt. Students, families listening carefully. Hear: KL. Just like that, Lord of Church sends workers in harvest field. They've studied, trained, prepared. Now sent; assigned. It's AD.
- What takes place in gospel for today, for 12 Aps: essentially their AD. **Vs. 7a.** Sent them out with asgmt: carry good news of salv into world on his behalf. This their AD. And while today's gospel does have spec appl for prs/trs who've been asgd to min (haven't forgotten, have you, that both PDW & myself asgd to SJ from Sem?), at same time, the asgmt of Jesus to share gospel is given to whole church. At end of Mk, Jesus says to all of us: **"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation" (Mk 16:15).** So with these words in mind, today as look at this gospel, we realize: today is also our AD.
- **Vs. 7.** Sent out in 6 pairs/teams, so have partner for diff task of ministry. And actually gave ability to perform miracles: to drive out demons, heal diseases – same miracles Jesus had been performing. And the reason Jesus gave this power: validate message, prove what saying re kingdom God was true. Same reason Jesus performed miracles; certainly out of love for people, but also validate his message, lead people to believe in him and trust in his as Savior.
- So gives them miraculous power and some instructions for their asgmt: **vs. 8-9.** Sound like strange instructions at first, don't they? Take sandals, staff – doing lot walking. But don't bring usual travel supplies: like change clothes, extra food, some cash – things you'd normally take on journey. Jesus says leave those behind. Why? Bec teaching discs to put all their trust in him, even with meager resources. God would take care of them on their asgmt; they just needed trust in him above all things.
- Quite lesson there for us. We as cong (SJ) may sometimes feel like have meager resources for our asgmt of sharing gospel. May wish building better shape; or had more wiggle room in budget; or had cashflow to purchase new equipment – basic supplies for church/school. Sometimes feel like we're working with meager resources; very frustrating. Know what: God teaching us put all our trust in him. Jesus going take care of our cong, even if feel like all we've got are sandals, staff. He's one who gave us asgmt of sharing gospel in first place; and promises never to leave nor forsake. That's what discs had to learn; what we need learn, as well – to trust in Jesus above all things, even with meager resources, as we carry out our asgmt of sharing gospel.
- Jesus also gave this instr: **vs. 10.** Idea here: content, thankful for what given. Jesus didn't want discs disrespecting hosts by saying, "This fam here has nicer house stay at; move over there." No, Jesus: "Be content, thankful for lodging, salary been given" – very good reminder for every called worker.
- On other hand, if people were not content with, thankful for gospel discs were giving them, then Jesus: **vs. 11** – which was way of saying: "You've rejected Jesus; so we're moving on; don't even want your dust on our shoes." And so the gospel would pass them by, move to new place.
- Which gets me thinking: what's worst possible thing could happen to our cong, here at SJ? What if tornado ripped thru ch/sch, tearing thru roof, scattering pews/desks all over? Or what if fire burned our building to ground, leaving only walls, like what happened to Luth ch in Milwaukee 2 mos ago? Or what if last summer's floods (realize: this month, 1 yr anniv) sloshed into our facility, decimated our property? Are these worst possible things could happen to our cong? I don't think so; nope. I think worst poss, this: that we would reject Jesus, and gospel would leave us. What happened to the towns that rejected discs; gospel passed them by. And still today: there are people and places that

reject Jesus, and gospel passes them by. Luther even talked re this. Called gospel a passing rain shower that waters the land; but when that Jesus is rejected, that gospel rain shower blows away:

- *Beloved Germans, ...make use of God's grace and Word while it is here! For you should know this: God's Word and grace is a passing downpour, which does not return to where it has already been. It has been with the Jews; but what's lost is lost, and they now have nothing. Paul brought it to Greece; what's lost is lost, and they now have the Turks. Rome and Latin-speaking regions have also had it; what's lost is lost, and they now have the pope. And you Germans dare not think that you will have it forever, for [your] ingratitude and disdain will not let it remain.¹*
- So warning here is this: never take gospel for granted or turn away from word of God. But believe it, embrace forever! Otherwise, gospel will pass you by; Jesus shake dust sandals off at your doorstep.
- And I'm sure that's what happened to some of towns where discs did their work. But for most part, sounds like their asgmt was success. **Vs. 12-13**. Through their work, lots of people were touched by gospel, came to know Christ.
- Telling you earlier re AD at MLC and Sem. Well, another asgmt that takes place in our synod in mid May: asgmt of the vicars. Vicar: pastoral intern, spends 1 yr at church studying under veteran pastor. Some you here long enough might remember vicars that studied under Pr. Weeks, 1980s. I was vicar in Appleton, 2007. And after the vicar year, you go back to Sem for 1 more yr school.
- Well, asgmt Jesus gave Ap in gospel: kind like their vicar year. Went out to work, for period of time, then came back to Teacher. Later in ch: **"The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught" (6:30)**. Very excited to tell Jesus that they had done their asgmt.
- But really, Aps' asgmt was not complete; neither is ours – nor will ever be – bec today there are still lots of people who need to be touched by gospel, come to know Christ, believe in him as their Savior from sin. Jesus has given his church of all time (to all us) the asgmt: **Mk 16:15**. And that makes today our AD. That means that you/I have been given solemn responsibility, asgmt from Jesus himself: to get out and share gospel! We're sharing gospel: here at church; in our school; through synod. We're praying that God: bless the prs/trs who share gospel; raise up new generation of prs/trs to share gospel; use our offerings to share gospel. And we're looking at our own lives for the opps God is giving us to share gospel. That's our asgmt. And today is our AD. Time to get to work.

Mark 6:6b-13

^{6b} Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village. ⁷ Calling the Twelve to him, he [Jesus] began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over impure spirits.

⁸ These were his instructions: "Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. ⁹ Wear sandals but not an extra shirt. ¹⁰ Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. ¹¹ And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, leave that place and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them."

¹² They went out and preached that people should repent. ¹³ They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.

¹ See <http://www.studiumexcitare.com/content/44> or *Luther's Works*, American Edition, Vol. 45 (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1962) p. 352-353.