Sermon | Proper 10C

TEXT: Luke 10:1-20

3 July 2016

*Harvest*

Dear saints of God,

In the Holy Gospel, Jesus tells us the harvest is plentiful. Jesus sends out 72 disciples, to gather in the harvest, that is to say, to bring the good news of the saving Gospel, Christ’s salvation to all the world. And by bringing people the Gospel, the disciples were bringing in the harvest of new believers, new Christians. And dear saints, that harvest is still going on today. In fact two new people were just harvested this morning in Holy Baptism, where they were brought to Jesus, and we rejoice with Annalise and Owen that through Baptism they are part of God’s good crop, and pray they remain with him forever.

Baptism is really simple and it goes like this: St. Paul says in Galatians chapter 3: “*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ*.” In Baptism, you get Jesus as a new set of clothes. Baptism covers you with Jesus. The holiness of Jesus, the righteousness of Jesus, the perfection of Jesus, the goodness of Jesus, the love of Jesus, and the gifts of Jesus, all wrapped around you like a new garment, a crisped, starched, shiny-white shirt in Baptism. In Baptism you get Jesus as a new set of clothes.

So that when God looks at you—dear Owen, Annalise, and dear baptized—he sees Jesus. He sees his Son. And so he loves you, delights in you, embraces you as his own dear child. He is your Father in heaven. And what your Father in heaven doesn’t see when he looks at you is your sin. He doesn’t see your weaknesses. He doesn’t see your shortcomings. He doesn’t see your failures. He doesn’t see all the ways you’ve broken his Laws and transgressed his commandments. All the things you should have done that you didn’t do. All the things you did do that you should’ve done. God doesn’t see any of that. All of that has been washed away, covered, in a tidal wave of baptismal water. God looks at you and sees Jesus.

And the gift of your Baptism is a clean conscience. We’ve talked before in the sermon about the conscience. How there’s really nothing worse than a guilty conscience. You ever have a guilty conscience? Some sin in your past that you keep on remembering, burdening you, troubling you, keeping you up at night? Well, there’s really nothing better than a clean conscience. And a clean conscience is a conscience that can say, on the one hand, “Yeah, I know my sin. I know what I’ve done. But on the other hand, I know my Savior. I know Jesus. And I know what he has done for me. I know he gave his life for me there on the cross. And I know the gifts of the cross—forgiveness, life, and salvation—were delivered to me in my Baptism. And because of that, because I am baptized, I know where I stand with God. I know that I’m right with God, justified before God. And I can be sure of that because it has nothing to do with me—what I’ve done for God. That’s not why I’m justified. It has everything to do with God, what he has done for me there. What he’s given to me there, in the water. That’s how I know that I’m right with him.”

Dear saints, this is the gift of God to you, to each and every one of you today—the gift of a clean conscience. You know where you stand with God, that you are right with God. You know that when you last day comes, and it’s time to stand before the Almighty Judge of heaven and earth, you know without a shadow of a doubt where you’re headed. Because it’s not about you. It’s about Jesus, what he has done for you, what he gives to you. It’s by his work and his work alone that we are justified and saved.

Dr. Luther says in the Large Catechism: imagine there was a doctor who was so skilled in the practice of medicine that he was able to give his patients the gift of eternal life. Just imagine that for a second. You go to the doctor, he gives you a pill, or does some surgery on you. And you’re not better for an hour, a day, a week, a month, or a year. You’re better forever. Imagine a doctor who could give his patients the gift of eternal life. Imagine what would happen. We know what would happen. The doctor would be on the cover of Time Magazine. Interviewed on 60 Minutes tonight. Trotted out on all the daytime doctor shows like Dr. Oz, the Doctors. This doctor would be the most popular person in the whole world. Everyone in the world would be clamoring for this doctor’s medicine. In fact, you couldn’t even get near him, for the huge line of rich people lined up out the door.

But then Luther says—and this is really wonderful: “*Here in baptism there is freely brought to everyone’s door such a treasure and medicine that it utterly destroys death and preserves all people alive*.” The medicine of immortality. The cure that all the world is searching for. Everyone wants to live. No one wants to die. If there was a medicine that could give eternal life, everyone would be searching for it. But here it is, Luther says. *Brought to everyone’s door*. In Baptism.

But what’s the problem? Why isn’t there a line stretching out our door, to the font? The problem with Baptism is that it’s so simple, so ordinary, so common. I mean, just look at the font. It’s just plain water. There’s nothing special about it. It’s not even as interesting as a bubble bath: at least there you have some bubbles to play with and a rubber ducky. But Baptism is just plain water. Baptism isn’t even as interesting as going to the gas station, seeing the wall of waters there—flavored waters, vitamin waters, waters from exotic places like Fiji or France. Compared to that, Baptism is nothing—Garrett water, tap water, plain water. To the naked eye, Baptism is just plain water. How can water do such great things?

And this is how we have to think about it. Imagine that every Christian has two sets of eyeballs. On the one hand you have your normal, earthly, physical, fleshly eyes, the ones that are attached to your head right now. But on the other hand, you’ve got your eyes of faith. And while your earthly eyes look at the font and can only see plain water, when you look at the font with the eyes of faith, you see something else. You see the Word of God joined to the water. With the eyes of faith, you can see that Baptism is not just plain water but the water included in God’s command and combined with God’s Word.

And which is that Word of God? 1 Peter 3, Baptism now saves you. Mark 16, whoever believes and is baptized will be saved. Matthew 28, Go ye therefore making disciples, baptizing in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. That’s the Word that’s joined to the water, so that Baptism is not just plain water but a life-giving water, rich in grace, and a lavish washing of the new birth in the Holy Spirit.

So with the eyes of faith you can see the power of baptism. You can see more than just plain water. You see the blood of Jesus in the water. The gifts of the cross in the water. Forgiveness of sins, life, salvation—everything, in the water. You can see it all—the great power of baptism in the water—with the eyes of faith.

Because of that, I’m going to invite you to do something you might think is a bit odd. We’re used to having the ushers dismiss by rows, gather in the narthex, and then leave. We’ll still do all of that. But if you have an extra minute, come back into the sanctuary, go to the font. I invite you to see the water, touch the water, make the sign of the cross with wet fingers in remembrance of your own baptism, bring the little children let them put their hands in the water and splash around a little. It won’t hurt a thing. I invite you to come to the water with the eyes of faith, see all God has put there for you, and rejoice.

*In the Name of the Father and of the +Son and of the Holy Spirit*. Amen.