Text: Luke 10:1-20

**Introduction**

The Church – capital C - has had various schisms across time. Most schisms tend to disappear. We call those heresies. Like the Arian heresy which was the cause of the Council of Nicea and the Nicene Creed. The Church of the East, that’s the Assyrian Orthodox, which our wars in the middle east have done great damage to, and the Oriental Orthodox, that’s largely the Coptic Church in Egypt, both accept the Nicene Creed, but the schism is usually traced to 451 AD and the council of Chalcedon. The second part of the Athanasian creed about the two natures in Christ - “one altogether, not by confusion of the substance, but by unity of the person” – is what they would have beef with. 1054 is usually given at the date of the Great Schism. The was the Split of the Eastern Church from the Old Western Church. The cause of that schism is largely the Primacy of the Patriarch of Rome. The Eastern Church has had fights – right now they have one between the Russian Patriarch and the Patriarch of Constantinople – but has avoid further schism. The Old Western Church hit a major one at the Reformation. It had been bumping up into it at multiple points – the Lollards, Jan Hus and the Bohemian Brothers – they each had a laundry list of offenses, but it was Martin Luther that got to core. And the Old Western Church would schism in a multitude of directions.

And this annoys the Roman Catholics, but it is a historical truth. It was the Lutherans in 1530 at Augsburg – June 25th the exact date – who first defined what they confessed in the Augsburg Confession. It’s a little longer than the Nicene Creed, although not terribly long. But it serves the same purpose. This is the rule of faith that we believe, teach and confess. The Roman Catholic would not define theirs until the Council of Trent with ended in 1563. And it isn’t quite as easy as just saying a date like I’ve done, history never is, but each of the church that come out of the Reformation claim the Nicene Creed, but also have some longer creed or confession.

I want to start with that not to bore you completely, but because I want to quote an article from that Augsburg Confession. Article 4 is the big one – On Justification. That’s the one it is often said “the church stands or falls.” That’s the one that Paul has been drilling on in Galatians these past weeks. “they teach that men cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works, but are freely justified for Christ’s sake, through faith…”. Faith alone.

But the question immediately comes up, how do we obtain this faith? And that is what Article 5 answers. “That we may obtain this faith, the Ministry of Teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted. For through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Ghost is given, who works faith; where and when it pleases God, in them that hear the Gospel…They condemn the Anabaptists and others who think that the Holy Ghost comes to men without the external Word, through their own preparations and works.”

So far, this is so much Paul from Romans 10. How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"…So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. (Rom. 10:14-17 ESV)” We obtain faith from outside of us. None of us has come to faith by our own efforts. Someone told us about Christ. The Holy Spirit worked through the words of that person to kindle faith. And that faith has justified you.

**Text**

But there are usually two complaints at this point. Well there are a few others, but a couple that are worth meditating on today. The first complaint is usually something like “that’s a lot of Paul, what does Jesus say?” In one sense you can just reply, “you can’t set Jesus against Paul, they agree.” If you are setting Jesus against Paul, what you are doing is questioning Paul’s apostleship. And if you are questioning Paul’s apostleship – something that he confronts over and over – you are creating a schism where neither Peter nor James found one. And you might as well throw away the entire bible.

But our Gospel lesson today forms the basis of a more substantive answer. “The Lord appointed 72 others and sent them on ahead of him…into every town and place where he himself was about to go.” And this is how Jesus described their mission. “Know this, that the Kingdom of God has come near.” The first message Jesus proclaims is “repent, the Kingdom of Heaven is near.” And that message has now been given to these 72 set apart. “The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me.” The Word comes from outside of us. It comes from the Father, through the Son, by the means of the Spirit. And those who are called are the means of that Spirit.

“That we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted.”

**Christology**

Now the second complaint is usually something quoting “the priesthood of all believers”. Fine, I can accept that faith comes by hearing. But the Spirit can us anyone anywhere. Ministers, priests, pastors and the like are just either performing a function that anyone can, or they could be usurping the role of Christ himself in some power play.

Now there is a simple surprising answer. Yes, the Spirit will most certainly use the priesthood of all believers. Probably starting with Dad and Mom who were the first to preach to us. There is nothing that is ultimately denied to that priesthood of belief. You yourself can be the means of the Spirit to proclaim Christ. And you will know. Don’t worry what you will say in that moment for the Spirit will be there.

But the entire history of the people of God has also had those set apart for the public task. Whether is was the judges, the Aaronic Priesthood, the Levites, the Prophets. Right down to the apostles and these 72. The Lord appointed them. Jesus says to pray to the LORD of harvest to send out more. And they are sent out in the person of Christ.

Now that might sound like the power play. And I won’t deny it can turn into that. But the reality is that the call is what Jesus says. Proclaim to the house “Peace be with you.” That peace is the forgiveness of Sins. Your sins have been forgiven by that cross. That peace is that you are connected to both Christ and the communion of saints. You have the body and blood of Christ. You have the consolation of bearing one another’s burdens here and now and the hope of the resurrection and seeing all. All the gifts that Christ has given us are yours.

The real effect of being ordained, being set apart in the person of Christ, is the division…is the cross. That peace will rest on some. Others will chase you out of town. And that day will reveal the work.

**Moral**

The 72 came back and the thing they are most excited about is that “even the demons are subject to us in your name.” And maybe it is my malformed ear, but I can’t help but hear a bit of sarcasm in Jesus response, “Yes, I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.” You have to appreciate the joy and excitement, and you might hope that joy stays and renews itself, but the villages of Galilee aren’t Egypt, or Babylon or Rome.

Yes, those sent by Jesus in his stead – have been given authority to tread on serpents.” But that is not the glory of the office. The glory is the same glory as that priesthood of all believers. “rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

**Eschatological**

Today we all labor under the cross. The harvest is plentiful an the laborers are few. There is never enough time and in ourselves we are never strong enough. We are sent out as lambs amidst wolves. We all have enemies that wish us to fail. And the tools that we have – the Word – seem wholly inadequate. Lord, why can’t you give a full moneybag and everything that would make the journey better. But what we have in the Word.

Because it is by hearing that faith comes, hearing the Word alone. And we are justified by faith alone. And these come by Grace alone. The grace of the one who bore the cross. The grace of the one who sent the Spirit. The grace of the one who answers prayer and sends laborers to proclaim peace. The grace of the one who has written your name in the heaven.

No grace has been denied any of us, regardless of our call. Through schisms rent asunder, by heresies distressed…we have that peace forever more. The peace of Christ has rested on you.