Pentecost 8 Mark 6:7-13
July 18, 2021 770*-546-349/380-323
*CW-S – "O Christ, Who Called the Twelve"

The Lord Provides Faithful Ministers
I. Who trust Him to take care of them.
II. Who faithfully carry out His work.

Dear Christian friends,

Today's Scripture readings focus us on the PUBLIC MINISTRY of God's Word – God providing **faithful ministers** AND the **message** they are to preach. We can certainly see God doing that FOR US here at St. John's. In the **last, almost 60** years you've been faithfully served by ONLY three different pastors with only about a year and a half vacancy during that time. Since we reopened our school in the 70s THE SAME has been true. When we've needed a pastor or teacher the LORD HAS PROVIDED. That's one more example of God's gracious, loving care of His people.

As we look at this reading **we see** that THE LORD PROVIDES FAITHFUL MINISTERS. The Lord provides **faithful ministers** 1)who trust Him to **take care** of them and 2)who faithfully carry out **His** work.

I. Who trust Him to take care of them.

WHO are these **faithful ministers**? WHERE do they come from? Mark tells us, ***"Jesus called the Twelve and began to send them out two by two."*** The Twelve are of course the twelve apostles – Peter, James, John, etc. Who were these guys? **In all honesty** they were a BUNCH OF NOBODIES. A few of them had been fishermen. **Matthew** had been a tax collector. **Simon** had been a political fanatic. Or take Amos in the OT reading. He had been a farmer.

We simply don't know much about these **faithful ministers**, but we do know WHAT'S IMPORTANT. They were all believers and **disciples** – **students** – of the Lord. They were **all** IMPERFECT, SINFUL men whose great joy and comfort was that Jesus was their Savior. They all believed that God HAD EVERY RIGHT to send them to hell for their sins but they also rejoiced that God HAD FORGIVEN all their sins **for His Son's sake**. None of them was the PERFECT pastor. Not all of them were GREAT PREACHERS. Each one of them had some WEIRD WAYS and **strange habits**. AND **each one** of them had been called by God to serve as a **faithful** minister. Amos told Amaziah in the OT reading, ***"I was not a prophet, nor …a son of a prophet. I was a sheep breeder and took care of fig trees. But the LORD took me from tending flocks and said to me, "Go, prophesy to My people Israel."***

TODAY'S **faithful ministers** come from the SAME PLACE as always – from among God's people. **They too** are IMPERFECT, SINFUL people who daily need and cling to Jesus as their **only Savior** and **hope** of heaven. They are the children of **farmers** and **factory-workers**, of **businessmen** and the **self-employed** – of **pastors** and teachers. None of them is the PERFECT minister. **Some** of them had never thought much of being a pastor or teacher. But SOMEHOW – perhaps through the WORD – the ENCOURAGEMENT – the suggestion or **example** of a fellow Christian – God led them to prepare for the ministry. And **then** THROUGH HIS CHURCH God called them to **be faithful ministers**.

The Lord sends them and AS FAITHFUL ministers they are to trust their Lord to **take care** of them. ***"(Jesus) instructed them to take nothing for their journey except a staff — no bread, no bag, no money in their money belts. They were to put on sandals but not to wear two coats."***

The ministry is NOT ABOUT making big bucks. **Faithful ministry** is not about WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME but what CAN I DO **for others**. Jesus is warning His **faithful ministers** to BEWARE OF GREED – of coveting – or being DISCONTENT. God tells all His people, ***"Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we certainly cannot take anything out.***

But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be satisfied." Jesus teaches all His people to pray, ***"Give us THIS DAY our DAILY bread."*** Faithful ministers - AS LEADERS of God's people - are to be examples for God's people. They are to PRACTICE what they preach/teach. Sent by their Lord they ARE TO TRUST their Lord to take care of them.

Jesus gives an EXAMPLE. ***"Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that area."*** As the apostles travelled from town to town they were not to SHOP AROUND for the best place to stay. **Once** invited to stay at a home they were to STAY PUT. **If later on** someone else offered them a BETTER **place to stay** – say with their OWN PRIVATE ROOM or in a **nicer part** of town – they were to STAY PUT right where they were. To move would SMACK of greed – ingratitude - PLAYING FAVORITES. In today's terms **faithful ministers** DON'T PRIMARILY DECIDE calls on better pay – **better** housing, etc. They don't first check out a place to **see if they like** it. They don't see one call as being BETTER – MORE IMPORTANT – a STEP UP in the **church world**. THAT SELFISH ATTITUDE is completely foreign to **God's view** of ministry. The ministry is about SERVING and GIVING – not self and getting. ***"Freely you have received, freely give,"*** Jesus tells His faithful ministers. They are to trust their Lord to **take care** of them.

Jesus takes care of His **faithful ministers** THROUGH His people. The **congregation** is not to use Jesus' words here as GOD'S PERMISSION to starve their workers or keep them in POVERTY. God tells His people, ***"The elders who lead well should be considered worthy of double honor, especially the ones who work hard in the word and doctrine. For Scripture says …the worker is worthy of his pay. In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel are to receive their living from the gospel."*** God's people receive their **faithful ministers** AS PRECIOUS BLESSINGS from their God. NO SALARY can adequately pay for being served and fed with **God's Word** of forgiveness and eternal life. The salary and benefits God's **people provide** their faithful ministers are not simply CONTRACT PAYMENTS for services rendered. They are CONCRETE EXPRESSIONS of the congregation's gratitude and appreciation for the FAITHFUL MINISTRY of **God's Word** and **sacraments**.

II. Who faithfully carry out His work.

"They went out and preached that people should repent." FAITHFUL ministers faithfully carry out God's work. Earlier Mark had written, ***"Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village."*** The apostles now assisted Jesus in this work. They went with Jesus' AUTHORITY and BACKING. Jesus gave them power to **do miracles** to show that they were WORKING FOR HIM. As the people listened to these **faithful ministers** they were REALLY LISTENING to God. The same is true today. Paul told the Corinthian Christians, ***"We are ambassadors for Christ, inasmuch as God is making an appeal through us."*** CALLED and SENT by the Lord – preaching and **teaching** GOD'S Word – **faithful ministers** work with DIVINE AUTHORITY and as God's PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVES.

"They preached that people should repent." FAITHFUL ministers preach and **teach** GOD'S Word – His LAW and gospel. People are to repent – to RECOGNIZE and **humbly** CONFESS their sins. We are not to TAKE "PRIDE" in our sins but be sorry for them. That only happens with the CLEAR, UNCOMPROMISING teaching of God's law. What God calls sin IS SIN – no matter WHO is doing it or what others think or **say**. People MUST KNOW that when God says, "DON'T DO that!" – or says, "DO this!" God means it. People must understand the HORRIBLE CONSEQUENCES of **ignoring** and **defying** their Creator – all eternity in hell's punishment. **Through His law** God crushes our **proud** hearts – He exposes our **utter** sinfulness – He strips us of all **pride** and **smugness** – He justly condemns us to hell.

The FAITHFUL minister of God must preach that TO BE FAITHFUL. But he doesn't stop there. And he doesn't tell people, "THIS IS HOW you can make it up to God – **how you** can STRAIGHTEN things

out with God." The **faithful** minister tells the crushed sinner, ***"Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven."*** The **faithful** minister points the DESPAIRING sinner to Jesus and says, ***"Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."*** The GLORIOUS JOY and privilege of the ministry is TAKING PEOPLE TO Jesus and say, "Here is the Son of God – He is also OUR Savior. **You and I** haven't obeyed God's commandments but Jesus lived a perfect life for us. **You and I** deserve death and hell because of our sins but Jesus died on the cross **to pay** for them **all**. Jesus shed His blood to ***'cleanse us from all sin.'*** **You and I** will one day die but Jesus rose from the dead and promises us that ***'whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.'*** **You and I** don't deserve any of this but Jesus says, ***'Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."***

WHAT A PRIVILEGE to preach and **teach** the gospel! That simple message about Jesus and ALL HE'S DONE for us and promised to us is ***"the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes."*** But not everyone will believe. ***"Any place that will not receive you or listen to you, as you leave there, shake off the dust that is under your feet as a testimony against them."*** Some just won't listen to God's Word. You talk to them about Jesus. You invite them to church. You urge them to COME BACK to Jesus/church – but they just WON'T listen. Then Jesus says, "MOVE ON!" You did what you could. They will one day HAVE TO ANSWER **to God** why they wouldn't listen to His **message** and **messengers**. ***"Amen I (Jesus) tell you: It will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town."***

"They went out and preached that people should repent." We're not told HOW MANY people were converted – HOW MUCH SUCCESS they had. The same is true LATER ON when the apostles went out ***"into all the world."*** We know very little about their work. We don't know **for sure** WHERE some of them worked or how they died. They weren't out to MAKE A NAME **for themselves** but for Jesus. They **weren't out** to be appreciated or applauded but to FOCUS PEOPLE ON Jesus. They simply FAITHFULLY carried out the work of their Lord. No faithful minister WANTS MORE TO BE SAID about him than these few words, ***"they went out and preached."*** Amen.

APOSTLES' CREED