

SERMON
+ Lectionary 14 C (Pentecost 4)
July 6, 2025

It has long struck me
how totally dependent farmers are
on things that are completely
beyond their control.
Specifically, for example, the weather.

Things like adequate rain, or too much rain,
and sunshine,
the end of the frost season,
the beginning of a new frost season.

This rainy season we've had has taken its toll
on some crops across our area.
We noticed on our trip across the state last weekend
that many fields of corn,
that should be knee high by the fourth of July
were barely over the ankle.

Insects, diseases, and varmints get added
to make farming a very risky venture.

As a result of all these things,
there is often a real sense of urgency
about farming.

You know the old saying,
"You've got to make hay while the sun shines."
For all its symbolic truth
about taking advantage of the opportunity
when it presents itself,
it is also literally true.

Corn is planted by tractor headlights late into the night
because rain is predicted to start the next day
that would make the field impossible for planting
for the rest of the week.

The last bales of hay are loaded onto the wagon
to get it quickly home and unloaded
before that black cloud forming on the horizon
dumps its wet load on the field.

Market vegetables are picked into the sunset
because the tomatoes are ripe
and on the verge of rotting,
and they wouldn't be good to anybody then.

There is urgency at harvest time
and it's vital that there are enough workers
at that critical time
or the harvest could be lost.

That's the kind of urgency Jesus shows
as he sends out the seventy –
representing all nations, according to Genesis –
to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord
by proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom of God
and bringing peace.

The harvest is plentiful! Jesus says.
The fields are bountiful and the grain is ripe.
So ask the Lord of the harvest
to send workers into the fields, he says.

Many people in many places
need to hear the good news of Christ and the gospel,
and to be offered the peace and the forgiveness
of the Kingdom of God.

That is our task.

We are called to proclaim with our words
and to live with our lives the good news of God's kingdom
and to work, and ask, and pray for more workers with us.

To go into the fields of the harvest
and to bring the peace of the Lord of the harvest,
to declare forgiveness,
to bring healing,
to proclaim the ways of God's reign among us.

And to do that
with the sense of urgency
that a farmer would feel
about the harvest of the crops of the field,
and that the Lord of the harvest feels
about the harvest of disciples and saints.

It is an urgent mission
and a vital mission
because "The kingdom of God has come near."
And that is the very vital and urgent message
many are dying to hear.

There, are many in your own neighborhood
and throughout our community
waiting to hear that message,
who, believe it or not,
have not heard it!

It would be a shame
if such a bountiful harvest
would dry on the vine
or rot in the field.

And that is why Jesus calls his followers –
why he calls us,
his baptized people of God,

members of his body, the church,
 disciples of the Lord of the harvest –
 that is why he calls us into the fields
 calling workers to join us in his harvest.

This is our calling: to go
 and to proclaim the nearness of God's kingdom
 and his steadfast love
 for his beloved creation.

To go
 and to proclaim peace
 and to welcome with hospitality
 those who receive the Lord's peace
 as a brother or sister.

To go
 and to proclaim the forgiveness
 that the reign of God brings
 and that gives those in sore need of it
 a fresh start and new beginning.

To go,
 and with a compelling sense of urgency,
 to bring the ways of God's reign –
 the reign of unity and community,
 love and service,
 healing and wholeness –
 to those of our community
 who are in sore need of those very ways
 of life in God.

This is our calling
 and it is also our gift.
 The seventy returned with joy saying,
 "Lord, in your name
 even the demons submit to us!"

And Jesus answers,
“See, I have given you authority
to tread on snakes and scorpions,
and over all the power of the enemy;
and nothing will hurt you.”

In our baptism, Jesus fills us with his own authority
by pouring out on us his own Holy Spirit of life.
He fills us with his resurrected life
by joining us to his death on a cross.
He unites us with one another and the whole community
of his body the church across time and space
to be harvesters in his fields of abundance.

He calls us and equips us
with the provision we need,
the kingdom we bring,
the forgiveness we proclaim,
and the peace we share
with all those just waiting to hear it and see it –
all those who need to hear, “Peace to this house!”