



O blessed Lord, through Moses You called a people to Yourself, and from them You delivered up Your own Son to be our Saviour. By His sufferings and death, He has redeemed us sinners from our sins. By His resurrection, He has released us from the fear of death. Help us to live as Your people, doing the good works for which we were created, and praying with confidence the petitions and supplications of our hearts; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

# *Season after* **PENTECOST SERMON**

**THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

**(Series A)**

**June 18, 2023**

**Sermon Text: Matthew 9:35-10:8(9-20)**

*“Freely Give”*

As He sent out His twelve apostles to preach the Gospel, Jesus told them, “Freely you have received, freely give.” Great crowds of people flocked to Jesus to hear the good news He brought. As His eyes scanned those needy people, His holy heart was deeply moved with compassion for them. They were harassed and helpless . . . like sheep without a shepherd.

To be sure He is the Good Shepherd. But the sheep are so many. And so, Jesus, the Good Shepherd, appoints under-shepherds, the twelve apostles, whom He sends to the lost sheep of Israel – sends them out in His name, by His authority, and armed with His Word in order to reach the lost sheep of the house of Israel, proclaiming to them, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Yes, ‘Freely, they had received from Him; and freely, they gave.’

And still today, as well. We and others are just like the crowds who came to the Good Shepherd, Jesus, in Galilee – lost sheep, harassed sheep, helpless sheep, sin-sick sheep. We are hurt by unkind words from others . . . and often return in kind. We are weighed down with guilt from things we have said and done. Predatory animals – the devil, the world, and our sinful nature – attack us. They accuse us of not doing enough to deserve a place in the Good Shepherd’s flock. ‘You have freely received,’ they call out to us, ‘but you have not freely given.’ And this is most certainly true. We hoard what we have because we are afraid of becoming poor . . . and so ignore the lost, helpless sheep around us.

The Good Shepherd looks upon us with deep compassion. He knows that we are helpless to work, earn, or give our way into the kingdom of heaven. By nature, we are like sheep marked for slaughter. And there is nothing we can do.

But He does. The Good Shepherd freely gives to us. For us, and for all the sheep of the world marked for slaughter, the Good Shepherd laid down His life on the cross. While we were still wild, hostile, lost, running away from Him; Jesus gave until it hurt, until He died . . . freely . . . without holding anything back. Yes, the Good Shepherd gives to lost sheep . . . gives Himself, His very body and blood – gives freedom from guilt, a clean slate, true health, healing of the mind and soul and body. And when He rose from the dead on the third day, He kept on giving – life here and now, the resurrection of the body, eternal life with Him in heaven.

These gifts we cannot buy for all the money in the world. We cannot earn the right to live forever – even with a lifetime of obedience to God and kind works to our neighbours . . . which, of course, is impossible for us so to do. No, forgiveness, life, and salvation cannot be bought or earned. But our Good Shepherd Jesus gives them to us freely, out of His grace and love, and which are received simply through faith in Him . . . gives them through and by those He has called and sent to be “laborers in the harvest” – the twelve disciples or apostles, and later on, pastors, teachers, ministers.

“Freely you have received.” Yes, our Good Shepherd still pours out gifts on us, the sheep of His flock. Freely, Jesus gives us a second birth through water and the Word in Holy Baptism. He brands each one of us as sheep of His flock with the sign of the cross – uniting us to His death and resurrection. Daily, we return to Him in heart-felt repentance, so that we might live each day in the forgiveness and absolution that flows freely from Him to us.

And to us and for us, the sheep of His flock, the Good Shepherd continues to freely give the food of heaven. The Sacrament of His body and blood is given for free to those who hunger for it from their souls. Sheep who are lost, harassed, and helpless find release from guilt, health and strength in this bread and in this cup. Yes, freely, week after week, year after year, Jesus gives this priceless gift to us. Freely, we have received.

“Freely you have received,” and then Jesus adds, “freely give.” Yes, freely give – not because by giving you can earn a spot in heaven. Freely give – not because by giving, other people will owe you. Freely give – not because you have to. Rather, freely give – because God has made us and all creatures. Freely give – because the Father freely gives us all we need to support this body and life. Freely give – because the Son of God freely gives us eternal life through His blood. Freely give – because the Holy Spirit keeps us in this true faith all our lives.

And how shall we freely give? By confessing in word and in deed Jesus Christ alone as Lord and Saviour to family members, to friends, to neighbours, to co-workers. By using the material gifts we have received from our Good Shepherd to help poor and needy people who are like sheep without a shepherd. By

giving ourselves to others in acts of kindness, compassion and love. In short, we now act like our Good Shepherd; that is, freely we have received, so we freely give. Amen.