

SERMON- Proper 6 (A)

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Exodus 19:2-8a

Psalms 100

Romans 5:1-8

St. Timothy's (Herndon)

June 14, 2026

Matthew 9:35-10:8 (~~9-23~~)

OPENING:

Last week we heard of Jesus crossing boundaries and heading... just about anywhere, for Christ's sake... so that his touch could provide healing.

This week, Jesus sends his disciples out to do the same, he names and empowers them... and us, his Church... to do God's work in the world.

To that point, last week, our Sunday School youth were asked where would Jesus go, if he were here in Herndon, where would he go to cross boundaries and offer that healing touch?

Here are the answers. "Top 10, drum roll please..."

#1) Jimmy's Old Town Tavern

"Number one place" that Jesus would go!

Okay, got that one out of their system.

#2) Herndon High School #3) Herndon Middle School

Now we are getting somewhere

#4) Dairy Queen #5) Moo-Thru

Okay back here, these are teenagers

#6) Great Harvest Bread (where we get our communion bread by the way)

#7) The Closet

#8) The (Homeless) Shelter

#9) The 7-Eleven on Elden Street.

I think they are on to something here.

I like their answers, and I like the question—let's think about each this morning as we hear Jesus' instructions for his disciples, the 12 in our Gospel, and for us... the 400+ disciples here in this congregation.

CHURCH

Notice first, though, how there is not, in fact, a "#10" on the list.

I flipped it over to make sure that there was nothing on the back,

as I wondered why "St. Timothy's Episcopal Church" was nowhere to be found.

Jesus, we read today in the first line of our Gospel, "went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their *synagogues*"—a rough equivalent for what we call

“churches.”

You might know, though, that the word for church, *Ekklesia*, was never supposed to identify church buildings or physical spaces.

Ekklesia literally means “Called out” in Greek and so it means, roughly: “the people/ group that are being called to be engaged in this thing together.”¹

I think you know this, maybe I need reminding what the church is because I spend so much time worrying about our building. So goes the song:

“The Church is not a building, the church is not a steeple, the Church is not a resting place, the Church is THE PEOPLE.”

The church, then, is the thing being “called out” in our story.

Just as Israel had been “called out” by God.

And just as the disciples are being “called out” of their jobs as fishermen and tax collectors or running a laundromat or whatever.²

WHERE:

The “who” and the “where” are intrinsically linked but, getting back to this idea of WHERE though. The question reminds me of those bracelets that were popular in the 1990s, they were yellow, and read “What Would Jesus Do?” (WWJD)... To repeat that of the teenagers. what about the question: “Where would Jesus Go?” (WWGD)

In our story, Jesus tells the eager disciples, the 12, these soon-to-be apostles, who must be giddy to get their assignments. He tells them, in our reading, to go....

Nowhere. He says “Don’t go to Samaria”—which would have been to their South. And then he says “don’t go to the Gentiles” which would have been to the North and East and West of where they were in Galilee.

So, in other words, their marching orders are to go “here.”³

What a curious geographical instruction.

But not if you know how easily Jesus can upturn our assumptions: the disciples want the power to smite and to condemn. Jesus gives them the power to forgive.

They want to sit on the right and the left. He says you have to give up everything.

They want to march on Jerusalem and on Rome, or on wherever. And he says, why don’t you stay here in little-old, same old same old, backward Galilee.

Tell Cousin Larry and Aunt Gertrue about this thing called the “Kingdom of God”... let’s start there.

¹ Meeks, Wayne. 1983. *The First Urban Christians: the Social World of the Apostle Paul*. New Haven: Yale, 108.

² Buechner, Frederick. 2006. “The Church” in *Secrets in the Dark- A Life in Sermons*, San Francisco: Harper Collins, 148.

³ Gundry, Robert H. 1994. *Matthew: a Commentary on his Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution*. (2nd Ed.) Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 185.

This must have been deflating, along with the promise of no pay and reminder to go ahead and pack light.

I know that technology indeed allows us to reach around the world and that we have friends in far-flung countries that are close enough in our hearts that we can, indeed, reach out and touch them.

There was something about God's economy of salvation—that's the fancy term—this plan for how the Gospel is to be shared, it can seem a bit dusty in the geography of THEN, when you start talking about Jews and Gentiles, or place names and categories that don't seem relevant.

But something about it being close, near, hyperlocal.

It's in Jesus' very self. Our reading say that when Jesus "saw the crowds, he had compassion for them." It is more than that, it is "Felt deeply"... it is to be moved in one guts, one's innards, *splanchnizesthai*—this expression which means "to be moved in one's bowels."⁴

KINGDOM of HEAVEN:

So the disciples' assignments were posted and they might have been initially disappointed in how ordinary their posting were... but there could be nothing ordinary about it because there is nothing ordinary about the Kingdom of God.⁵

We are not called out of our ordinary lives to do something extraordinary (at least most of us are not) but rather we are called out of believing that ordinary life is indeed simply ordinary.

THAT is the geography that Jesus is interested in and it's buried in a field and it's a trinket lost between the floorboards, it's the loser who is lost in the dark alley just around the corner, or the child who cannot leave the basement, or to the worker at the corner of Elden and Alabama who is hoping for work and not to be exploited. Frederick Buechner says it best: "The kingdom of Heaven is only 20 minutes down the road, for Christ's sake. The Kingdom of Heaven is in the movie theater as the old woman gets up to leave, shaking popcorn crumbs out of her lap. The Kingdom of Heaven is there as the fat man goes driving by in his pickup (truck).... The Kingdom of Heaven is in the eyes of love and longing and blessing that we raise to look at him as though he is a rainbow in the sky."⁶

⁴ Albright, William and C. S Mann. 1971. *Matthew*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday. 114-115.

⁵ Buechner, 148-149

⁶ Buechner, 153.

CONCLUSION

“What Would Jesus Do?” Eventually the bracelet makers felt like they needed to answer the question so they come up with another acronym bracelet FROG.

“Fully Rely on God.” FROG “Fully Rely on God.”

That’s a good, Scripturally accurate, theologically sound answer.

But I think that our teenagers, and me, would say:

“Not good enough, I need more...”

Here’s the thing... the Disciples actually never ask “What would Jesus do?”

A better question might be, instead of WWJD:

“What is the Jesus who lives in me calling me to do?”

This Jesus in my guts and in my bowels,

This Jesus who is making my ordinary life extraordinary.

The disciples then indeed lived out that calling. They went where he went. They healed and cleansed, and preached and taught.

But they did not cosplay Jesus and speak in Parables. ⁷

The Disciples then became the Church, and that’s where we come in.

Thus Church ultimately is called out to call attention to what is the most real.

The Church is called out of the world, somehow both a *part* of and *separate* from it.

It’s a kind of way-station for our discipleship, a rest stop on the highway... but not the end goal or the permanent oasis.

The Church is NOT, talking about the Episcopal Church specifically here, escapism retreating into an archaic dream denoted by the church’s liturgy.

But, it does not need to be relevant for the sake of relevance.

(Another) But, I would add, it should not be *irrelevant*.

The Church is in the world, but not of it

Church does not want to speak to the world, simply to make itself relevant, rather it wants to “rock your world.” ⁸

AMEN

⁷ Stephen Tomkins. (December 8, 2011). “What would Jesus do? The rise of a slogan.” *BBC News*.
<https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-16068178> (accessed June 12, 2026.)

⁸ Willimon, William H. 2016. *Pastor: the Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry*. (Revised Edition) Nashville: Abingdon, 80, 204-205.

