

9 June 2010  
St. Barnabas, Apostle

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church  
Greenspring Village, Springfield, VA

Jesu Juva

“All That We Need”

Text: Mark 6:7-13; Acts 11:19-30; 13:1-3

When we hear the stories in the Bible, one of the challenges we face is to realize that they are not just stories about other people in other times and other places. They are that, but they are more - they are also stories about us. They are stories to teach us something about ourselves, and to teach us about our Saviour. They are stories to show us our unbelief and turn us to faith in Christ. That we no longer believe in ourselves, but believe and trust in Him alone.

That struggle - to believe and trust - is what faced the twelve in the story we heard tonight from Mark, as Jesus sent them out, two by two, to preach repentance. But not only that, they were also to take nothing with them except a staff and the clothes on their backs - no bread, no bag, no money in their belts. Wherever they went, whatever they needed, they would have to receive. They had no back-up - they had to go in faith and trust in Christ alone. Trusting that He who sent them would also provide for them.

Do you think that was easy? You know that it was not. You know because we who live in luxury and abundance and have been given so much *still* fear for the future, and how - and *if* - God will provide. What will happen if I lose my job? What will happen if I lose my health? What will happen if I lose my spouse? What will happen when I am alone? Who will take care of me when I cannot take care of myself? And how many other questions and fears cause us worry and doubt, and cause us to struggle with faith? Part of us, on the one hand, trusting in our Lord and His promises to provide, but another part of us not so sure, and afraid. And so we walk into the future like the twelve walked away from Jesus that day . . . struggling between faith and unbelief. A struggle that we will not be free from as long as we live on this side of the grave.

But know that Jesus does not condemn you for that struggle. In fact, He may cause some of these struggles in your life in order to strengthen your faith. It was Jesus, after all, who sent the twelve out as He did, and perhaps He will send challenges to you to call you to faith as well. To get you to face your unbelief and repent of it, and be raised to faith in the forgiveness of your sins.

You see, that's why Jesus sent out the twelve to preach not just anything, but to preach repentance. For while none of us likes to be told we're sinners and that we

struggle with faith and unbelief, we know its true. We're not the good people we should be. We do not fear, love, and trust in God above all things. We do not love our neighbor as ourself. We have demons that need exorcising and sins that need forgiving. And so the preaching of repentance is also comforting - because we no longer have to pretend to be someone that we're not. And we don't have to pretend before God.

Instead we confess and repent. And we do so because the Lord who reveals and shows us our sin, also revealed and showed us His love for us on the cross. For in Jesus on the cross, we see our God who did not stay far away from us, wagging His finger at us, and condemning us for our failures and unbelief - but our God who came to us and became one of us, who took upon Himself all of our sin and unbelief, and who then took our stripes and punishment and death in our place, and provided for us the forgiveness of our sins. That, as Isaiah said, His cross be a light for the nations and the means to bring out we who were imprisoned from the dungeon of sin and death. To take us by the hand and keep us, that we may be His own.

And He who has done this for us - giving His only Son - will He not also provide for us everything else that we need (Romans 8:32)? Indeed, He will.

And He did provide for the twelve - at *this* time as He sent them out with nothing, and they lacked nothing (Luke 22:35); but also in the future, through a man named Barnabas, who we remember and commemorate tonight. We read in Acts chapter 4 (v. 36-37) that Barnabas sold a field he had and gave the money to the apostles. We heard tonight how God used Barnabas in Antioch to encourage the Greek believers, and to bring the former persecutor of the church, Saul, from Tarsus to Antioch, to begin his missionary career. And then also how God provided for the churches in Judea during a famine through the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

And in your time of need, the Lord will do the same. He will send a Barnabas to you - perhaps to preach repentance and call you to faith, or to provide for your needs, or to encourage you. Perhaps it will be someone you know, or someone you don't. Maybe there will be many. But the Lord will provide for you. For He has promised to do so. It may not be easy, and the struggle may be great - but your Lord is good to His Word, and is working good, even if it be hidden from our eyes at times. He calls us only to believe and trust.

Or maybe He will use you as His Barnabas, to speak or provide or encourage. You He may not send out like the disciples, but is He not able to use you in other ways? And even if you feel like a failure - do not doubt, but believe. Your Lord who brings the dead to life and makes saints out of sinners, can work through the less-than-perfect efforts of disciples like you and me as well. Working His good and

accomplishing His will. And don't worry about having to find such needs and opportunities - the Lord will bring them to you. We need only pray for the eyes to see them, the faith to act, and to trust that our Lord will take care of the rest.

As the twelve walked away from Jesus that day, they knew not what awaited them. And as we face the future, neither do we know. But this we do know: that our way is the way of the cross. The Christian life is not an easy and glorious life, but a life of struggle and pain. But it is exactly in this struggle and pain that our Saviour comes to us and strengthens us and says *fear not*. And it is exactly in this struggle and pain that our Saviour teaches us to rely on Him and *not* on ourselves. And in repentance, in faith, in service, we do. And then whatever happens, whatever awaits us, is in His hands. His good hands. His nail-pierced hands. His hands that baptized us, His hands that feed us, and His hands that will one day raise us and take us home. Home to that place where all struggle will be ended and we will need no bread, no bag, no money in our belts, and no faith. For we will be with our Saviour, and see Him as He is. He who is all that we need.

In the Name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.