



Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. **AMEN**

What makes for a good movie? I heard some of you say that the new movie *Top Gun Maverick* was awesome. What made it a good movie? Tom Cruise? Or is it the action that makes it a good movie? I suspect that not either of those two alone would make it a good movie, but a good plot needs to go along with the action. Along with a good story you probably need something to engage your auditory senses. Did you know that the last silent movie was made in Hollywood in 1935, 87 years ago? I never have seen a silent movie from beginning to end but I would guess that it would not do much for me.

In fact, I suspect that most people's best loved movie scenes include spoken dialogue. My guess is that you know several movie lines that you can recall right now. My favorite is "Frankly my dear I don't give a damn." Not just because my children are named Frank and Leigh, but what a powerful scene in *Gone With The Wind*. Or how about "Here's looking at you kid," from *Casablanca*. Or "Go ahead, make my day," from *Sudden Impact*. "Phone Home," from *ET*. "There's no place like home," from *The Wizard of Oz*. "Houston, we have a problem," from *Apollo 13*. So, for me, it is the dialogue, the spoken word that makes or breaks a movie.

And I hope for you, the spoken word is a highlight of our worship here together on Sunday mornings. God's word is shared in the reading of

Scripture, in the words of our sung liturgy and hymns and I pray, hopefully in my message.

After giving His 12 disciples their commission, Jesus now broadens the scope of missionaries by 70 more men. In our Gospel reading today, Jesus has assembled this group of new soldiers and now is giving them their marching orders. Much like Jesus gave the prior select 12 men instruction, so too these men have heard how to fight the fight. First, Jesus tells them that the “harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.” There is more work than they can possibly do. And they understand that harvest time is a season of great urgency. Jesus continues that there is no uniform to speak of. That means that there is no outward sign that they are any different than the people they are ministering too. They will need to pray that they can complete their mission. They must keep their nose to the grindstone because there is much work to be done. And while doing this work there will be danger so they should not concern themselves with worldly goods. In other words, they need to travel light.

There is also no time for idle chit chat. They need to keep on task and tell everyone that will listen that there will be peace in their homes as the kingdom of God is ever so nearby. And if folks don’t want to listen, then move on and shake off the dust from your feet and continue on your path. And above all, Jesus tells these 70 new missionaries, “The kingdom of God has come near.”

So now you have the whole training program. Got it? Our marching orders come to us as well. His words, as he sends us out into the world are the same. As a preacher, I don’t just make this stuff up every Sunday morning. I may tell different stories to get you to remember, but the material is still the same. It is Jesus who is speaking to us in these Gospel passages. Even though I often try to get you to laugh, it is not to entertain you, but rather to make sure you are still awake and to drive home the teachings of Jesus.

One Sunday long ago when I was called to St Paul’s in Sugar Island outside of the Milwaukee area, I told a story during my sermon. Since I love stories, that was pretty usual, but I can’t even remember what the topic was or the story. But around dinner time that evening, I had a call from the Gunther family. Mom, dad and three sons, two of whom were teenagers were having dinner and they were talking about the story I told, that morning during worship. They could remember the story and the punch line but weren’t sure what that had to do with the Gospel lesson. I hope I explained it well on the phone to the

mom. And I was so excited that at least they were talking with their boys about what I said and even more excited that they called for clarification.

Being called to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a huge honor. It is one I take very seriously. But it is not me that is speaking the words of Jesus, but rather Jesus speaking through me. Any of you that have been assisting ministers know that we pray before a service starts, usually in my office. Assisting minister, me and sometimes the musician, have a short prayer asking God to be with us as we speak or play music to His glory. We ask God to guide our words, help us speak clearly, so that you may hear what He needs you to hear. It is not up to us but rather the Holy Spirit to make our attempts at sharing God's word clear.

I also feel that it is important to share both the teachings of Law and Gospel. For the last few weeks, I have mentioned being comfortable in worship. That is not always the intent of God's word. The Law speaks to us to convict us. It tells us we are not the holy pious people others might think Christians are. And we struggle to keep God's law. Many of us work hard at it but sometimes it is allusive. A good example is our questioning about abortion. Many of you commented last week that you wanted to know what Scripture says about it. That is why we are going to gather together and look at this most difficult topic during Bible study hour for the next few weeks.

We want to keep God's law but must always go back to His word to get our direction. And we cannot ever stop seeking the answers to our questions in Scripture. We need to be in His Word day in and day out. And allow it to flow into our lives with the help of the Holy Spirit of God.

Preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ is always a much more pleasing idea. As a pastor, we usually concentrate on the good news of what Jesus did for us on the cross. Good news is always easier to tell than the bad stuff. But hearing Scripture is a combination of both Law and Gospel. Pray for me that I will preach this truth in ways that keeps this miracle of God's love something you continue to marvel at. This is what Luther said about the pastor's role:

"I do not worship my pastor, but my pastor tells me of a Lord whose name is Christ and makes Him known to me. I will be attentive and listen to my pastor's words so long as my pastor leads me to this Master and Teacher who is the Son of God."

Whether we are pastors or not, we are all called to witness to God by words and deeds. Together we share God's word to each other. We are all pastors

and ministers of the word of God. Some of us are called to be more in the public eye, but we all are called to help each other set our eyes on Jesus and follow His word.

In the Lutheran magazine years ago one of my seminary professors Norma Cook Everist wrote this about the church being off tract:

“Being trendy or popular can’t be the goal. We are called to follow Jesus who was rejected and crucified before being resurrected. Faithful discipleship doesn’t mean seeking to be ‘well-liked’ but speaking the truth of the Gospel. . . . ‘Popular’ may also mean of the people where they are.... You may have heard it said that ‘God does not call us to be successful but to be faithful.’ True, but it is no excuse for neglecting to reach out to people who have not yet heard the good news in ways they can understand.”

Good answer. We are all in this together, folks. Our call is to share the Gospel, the good news of Jesus. And I suspect no one among us can preach like Paul or work miracles like Peter. But we all have our special God given gifts which we can use to share the word of God with others. Advice on how to do that is right here in our Gospel text from Luke this morning. It takes all of us to make a difference in our world.

I know that most of you have heard me say that I am a lousy cook. But the one thing that I do really well is make breakfast. I love eggs. Scrambled, fried, poached, braised, deviled and hard boiled. Poor Rodney has to like them all or he would be hungry ‘til lunch. And I suspect you may prefer one over another. But eggs are prepared in many fashions to suit all tastes. This is no different than God’s word to us. We hear it read by our assisting minister this morning. And we will hear it again in our stories over coffee hour. We will hear it again as we deal with our feeling on abortion during our study today. Folks, the Bible is our manual for living. It is the living breathing word of God for all people. It is what can break our fast of straying from God. We all hear things differently when reading Scripture.

I cannot tell you how many times I have had someone, maybe even one of you, thank me for a message on a certain topic on a Sunday morning. And it was not even what I thought I preached on. The Spirit is alive and works in us as we need. Sometimes we do have selective hearing in relation to God’s word. But that is OK. He will feed us the egg or nugget in a form we can understand

just when we need it. But in order for the Holy Spirit to do that we must be open to letting in God's word.

Our text today concludes with the 70 returning to Jesus telling him of their journey. They returned with joy, telling Jesus even the devil submitted to them. And Jesus reminds them that it is not about them controlling spirits. Rather they should "rejoice that your names are written in heaven." WOW folks. Those 70 men took instruction from Jesus, listened, and did what he said, and they were filled with joy. God's grace overwhelmed these men as they went out to share their faith with the world. Forgiveness, abundant life, and this promise of eternal life with Jesus in heaven one day can be yours as well.

So don't brush off the word of God. Immerse yourself in Scripture each day and remember that it is God speaking to you. He is calling you to follow Him and have faith that his Word, Jesus Christ, is alive and true. **AMEN**