

SERMON  
 First Lutheran Church  
 Aitkin, Minnesota  
 December 6, 2015

Isaiah 40:1-11  
 Mark 1:1-4  
 Rev. Darrell J. Pedersen

### The Sent One

Dr. Gerhard Frost

I remember being sent; it made me ten feet tall. How dignifying to walk in borrowed prestige down that winding road to the country store. I carried a note, not in my handwriting, of course, because I couldn't write; but I could scribble. I never scribbled on that note. And I was careful, so careful lest it fall in the dirt. I was content just to carry it.

To be sent is an exercise in being third. First, there's the sender; second, the one to whom you're sent; and then, you, the sent one. Any two without the other won't do.

"He called to him the twelve," the scriptures say, "and began to send them two by two . . . and he charged them . . ." He called them, he sent them, he charged them. What an honor to be carriers of his love!

(From "Blessed is the Ordinary," 1980, Winston Press, Mpls., MN)

Dear Partners in Christ's Mission, **together we carry a note**. God is the sender. We are the sent. A badly wounded, confused and hopeless world is the one to whom we are sent. **Our message? "Here is your God! ... See, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep."** We have the greatest news ever shared with this world. It is the most hopeful, life-giving Word – **Jesus**. **"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life."** Do you believe that?

**Ross Watson** trusted God. Ross was drafted to fight in the **Korean War**. There was an article about him in the Brainerd Dispatch last Sunday. On his month long

ride overseas, he created a little **ring out of a dime**. He slowly rotated the dime, pounding on its side with a spoon. Then he hollowed out the inside to finish the ring. **My father did the same thing** with Australian money during **World War II** while he was serving in New Guinea. Ross had given his ring to his little sister. Recently she returned the ring to him and now he has passed it along to his own daughter. My dad gave me this ring when I was a child. He had to file it off when I sprained my finger as a teen. This ring is a **legacy** from my father.

Ross saw lots of action in Korea. At least twice he came close to losing his life by mortar fire. **“I said the Lord’s Prayer often,”** Watson said. At a church service near the front line, the priest asked soldiers if they wanted to request a hymn. Watson asked for **“Silent Night.”** For years afterward, this song caused tears to well in his eyes every time he heard it. Ross **passed his ring** along to his daughter. I wonder if he also **passed along his faith**. **My father passed faith** on to me. **We are passing faith** along here at First.

Sisters and brothers in Christ, we have been **drafted into God’s service**, into God’s **ancient army of love**. **We get to join ranks** with the likes of **Isaiah** who gave God’s exiled people Israel a word of life and hope. Hundreds of years later, we get to walk hand and hand with **Jesus** as he brought forgiveness, healing, new life and hope to Israel right under the nose of the Roman army that occupied their land. We get to march side by side with the **pioneer Swedes** who despite the most meager of resources built **Maria Chapel** in Aitkin County. We benefit from the people of this congregation who **built the original building here** when the old church burned down. We get to pray with the **soldiers who turned coins into rings** during World War II and during the Korean War. We benefit from those of you who **helped to add on this wonderful sanctuary** when the old one became too small for all those who were coming. This very day, we walk with the **parents** who have, in faith, brought their little ones to be baptized at this font. We get to keep company with the **folks in our nursing homes** who know the ancient scriptures, hymns and prayers by heart. We get to rub shoulders with the **new friends** who may only just have come to know the depth of God’s love, compassion and grace in the last year or two. We are privileged by God to be a

part of this Christian family where some have only just the **tiniest bit of faith**, while others may have **mountains of faith**. We gather here with some people who have had their **worst year ever** and with some people who may **never have been in a better place** in life. God has blessed us with **life, faith and salvation**. We have been **given an amazing legacy**. We have an **amazing legacy to pass along**. Jesus said, **“I am here for you.”** And Jesus said, **“Come and follow me.”**

**Carrying out our commitment** to follow Jesus is not about **“have to.”** It is about **“want to”** – we have been called to **serve shoulder to shoulder** with Jesus and with each other. This Christian calling is **privilege, high honor and blessing**. As a **young pastor**, I used to struggle over having to **“beg people for money”** to support the mission of Christ’s Church. I have since learned that we humans have been **created with a need to give**. There is a great big hole in us that can only be filled by God’s love and by love of our neighbor. You remember – the greatest commandment is that we **love the Lord our God** with all of our heart, mind and soul. You remember – the second greatest commandment, just as important, is that we **love our neighbor as we love ourselves**. **You can give without loving. But you can’t love without giving.**

**Love of God and neighbor isn’t an obligation that will save us.** It is a **channel** through which **life and blessing flow abundantly** to and through us. Love of God and love of neighbor is **how God puts flesh on the bones of our faith**. **We were created to give ourselves away in faith. Stretching your giving stretches your faith and grows your love.** I’m not begging you for money. I’m inviting you to **trust the Lord with your life and all that you have**. I’m inviting you to live in God’s **abundance** every day. The **world says there’s not enough**. **God says there’s more than enough**. Who do you believe? Jennifer and I have given away 10% or more for years. We have a big mortgage, big college debts, car payments and all the rest, yet there is always enough. **When Jesus carries us home on the last day, we won’t be carrying any baggage. If you trust God with your life, let your offerings show it.**

We were **created with a need to give**, but, we were also **created to give to a need**. If you think that **First Lutheran** in Aitkin, Minnesota is **faithfully working to do God's will** in this community and world – **let your financial offerings show your support**. Together as God's people **here at First Lutheran**, we are God's hands through...

- Food Shelf, Community Meal, Brainerd Soup Kitchen
- Quilting, Prayer Shawls and Crash Baskets
- Global Barnyard, Seminary Scholarships and Lutheran Social Services
- Sunday School books, Confirmation materials and Bible Storybooks
- Bible Camp, Youth Gatherings, and College Scholarships
- Sanctuary, Fellowship Hall, Gym and classrooms
- Campus Ministry, Seafarers' Ministry and Liberian Mission work. . .

**Working together with God's people all over the country**, through the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, we have reached our **\$15 million goal for the Malaria** Campaign, helping to end this disease across the globe. We have started **53 new congregations** this year. **Over 30,000 youth and adults** partnered to help residents in **Detroit** and to sing God's praises. We have supported the work of **240 missionaries** serving in **40 countries**. Every year **450,000** people enjoy the ministries of **145 Lutheran Bible camps**.

We are living in a day when it seems things couldn't get much darker. So were the people in Isaiah's day. Isaiah told them **God still cared and would faithfully give them hope, life and even joy**. Jesus came in the flesh to deliver on that promise. Our world killed Jesus, but that didn't stop him. **Jesus is here right now**, faithfully loving and caring for you and me. And Jesus is also moving through us to love and care for this hurting world. **We've got a message to deliver**. God chose us. What an **honor** to be **carriers of God's love**. **Blessing. Opportunity.**

ISIS. Terrorism. Racism. Mass Killings. Drug Addiction. Homelessness. Climate Change. Hopelessness. Despair. Suicide. **Are these our legacy? Or is our legacy Jesus? I'm going to hang onto Jesus. And I know Jesus is hanging onto us. You believe that too don't you? That's why we're here.** Thanks be to God. Amen.

