

The Seventh Sunday of Easter  
May 17, 2015  
The Rev. Robert H. Malm

## Sent Into the World

The four Gospels make it perfectly clear that Jesus intended his disciples to carry on his ministry after his Resurrection and Ascension. “Disciples” – followers – become “Apostles,” from the ancient Greek word meaning “to send away.”

St. John tells us that as Jesus prayed for his disciples on the night before his death at the Last Supper, before going to the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus says to God, “*As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.*” Four days later, on the first Easter night, as the Risen Lord comes to ten of his disciples, he tells them, “*As the Father has sent me, even so I send you...*” (John 20:21). Easter is the time of sending Apostles into the world.

So, too, St. Matthew ends his story of Easter with Jesus’ Great Commission, “*Go, make disciples of all nations, baptize, teach.*” (Matthew 28:19,20). St. Luke connects Easter to Pentecost by Jesus telling his disciples before his Ascension, “*You shall be my witnesses ... to the end of the earth ...*” (Acts 1:8).

During this Easter season we have read from the Book of Acts, the record of the Apostles being sent into the world. And we have seen how the mission expanded from the Jews to all people, from Jerusalem to Greece and Rome and beyond. Yet as we consider our own apostolic commissioning here and now, we wonder, we pray, how is God sending us? How is God calling us to go into all the world and be witnesses of the Risen Lord, apostles of God’s love in Christ?

As we reflect upon our futures, we need to remember two realities that Jesus shared before sending out his disciples, making them Apostles.

First, we are in the world, but we are not to be of the world, dominated by the world’s values, standards, judgments. I hope each one of us has felt this tension – in the world, but not of the world. We are all pilgrims, passing through this world, knowing another reality, another truth, a Kingdom that breaks into the world in mysterious and glorious ways. Apostles are sent into the world, they are in the world, but they are not of the world.

The second reality we know as we are sent out is Jesus’ prayer for us – a prayer said at the end of the Last Supper; a prayer recorded by John, his best friend; a prayer that is eternal, ongoing, for us here and now.

Jesus prays that God would share four blessings with those sent out.

1. Make them one. Help them to work for unity. Give them the sense that they are related, bonded to all – one human community – even as the world is divided by conflict, misunderstanding and the quest for power. Keep them united in God’s love for all creation.

2. Fulfill their joy; knowing that God's love brings eternal joy -- a bliss beyond human understanding, a joy that conquers fear. Joy is the gift of the Holy Spirit after faith, hope and peace.
3. Keep them from evil. We renounce evil at every baptism. We are confronted by evil every day. God keeps us from evil as we know and recognize evil. God gives us the strength to know that "*perfect love casts out fear.*" Love triumphs over evil.
4. Sanctify and consecrate them in truth. Those sent out always seek the truth, share the truth, and use the truth to overcome denial, to overcome falsehood, to overcome hypocrisy, to overcome lies. Jesus rose from the dead to show that God's love is stronger than death. This is the ultimate truth.

We can become apostles as we live by these gifts Jesus gives us. Each one of us is called to be an apostle, to go into the places we are sent to share God's love. We are sent to our families, to our schools, to our places of employment, to our communities and, yes, even to our churches. We are sent to this church – Grace Church – to share God's love in Christ. We are sent into the world.

Acts 1:15-17, 21-26

Psalm 1

1 John 5:9-13

John 17:6-19