

**June 18, 2017 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**  
**Rev. Jen Nagel, University Lutheran Church of Hope**

**Psalm 100, Romans 5:1-5**  
**Matthew 9:35—10:8**

**Grace and peace, beloved in Christ. You are called by name, you are God's own. Amen.**

**Last Sunday** I shared the story of *beginning* of the recent PEASE Academy graduation ceremony.

Now PEASE Academy is the sober high school with whom we've shared this facility for 28-some years:

It's called a sober high school because all the students are in recovery from addiction.

At the beginning of the ceremony they'd lined up in the narthex, all excited and fidgety in their graduation gowns, 17 students representing between them 8, 030 days of recovery.

**What I didn't tell you** about was the end of the ceremony, when they left the sanctuary, diplomas in hand.

Now to be honest I wasn't actually in the space, for I'd ducked out to attend a meeting on the other side of the building, but I heard the church bells ringing, and I don't mean just a little ringing, I mean a lot of ringing, tolling we call it, for a minute or two or more.

At first I was confused, don't bells sometimes mean trouble, an emergency in the town center, come help?

But then I remembered the graduation ceremony.

Later I heard that it was the youngest PEASE Academy student who'd been given the joyful, brave role of ringing the bells and sending out those courageous grads into new ventures.

**There are two words in our gospel this morning that need a little clarity.**

One word is **disciple**.

Sounds obvious enough, that is, until you set next to it the other word, and that word is **apostle**.

It turns out that these two words have different meanings.

Disciples are followers, they are students, adherents of a teacher, so they follow the teachings of that teacher, in this case Jesus, who summoned the 12 disciples in today's reading.

But then right after that it says, "***These are the names of the twelve apostles...***"

Now the word apostles literally means **ones sent out**.

**It's that movement** of being disciples, followers, to being apostles, ones sent out, that we focus on today.

At first blush it may seem simple: first you are a disciple, then you are an apostle.

I'd rather think there is some circular give and take.

We follow, we grow, we learn, we are sent out, but then we also return, to be renewed, to learn more, indeed to learn the heart of Jesus, then we are sent out again.

**A good friend and colleague recently returned from a trip to the holy land.**

She tells of standing on the edge of the Mediterranean Sea at Caesarea Maritime on this long, white, soft sandy beach, feet bare, looking out across this gorgeous brilliant blue sea, no land in sight.

Now there are plenty of water bodies in the Bible that are relatively compact, you could see land across. But not from this once vital port behind which Herod's castles rose, the seat of civic and economic power. Caesarea is the spot in, say, the book of Acts from which so much of the biggest "sending out" happened. Right there, looking out from this spot between present day Tel Aviv and Haifa, you can't see any land. So to be sent out, to be an apostle, to go from that place pushing the political and social powers of the time, daring to go across waters of which you can't see the other side.... that is risky, that is life changing. That takes some reflection on all this Jesus-fellow taught.

I mean, why not take the safe route, learn a little more, keep quiet, stay on the safe shore.

Why go? What have we experienced that propels us to leave the safety of the shore, to risk, to go out?

**Since Friday's announcement** of the verdict in killing of Philando Castile, I've been thinking about our roles as disciples, indeed, apostles, ones sent out.

Matthew tells us apostles proclaim good news, cure the sick, raise dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. Truth is, dear ones, there is a lot of proclaiming and healing that is needed, a lot of death and atrophy in our systems, a lot of pain and grief and lament and real questions: will it really ever change?

Can our system, our society, value black and brown bodies and minds in the same way we do white bodies and minds? How many generations will this take? How long has it been? What is the cost?

And in the meantime, what about now? What about these tears and the anger and the fear of our black and brown kin, and this anger and fear, this real sickness in our land?

**Our congregation is working on a racial justice statement.**

The draft to date says that we reject "unjust laws, unfair practices, hostile acts, unconscious bias, white supremacy, and fear of people of other ethnicities or cultures."

Let's not kid ourselves, it's risky, to be sent out, no far shore in sight, our own baggage and yet-to-be examined privilege and pain within us, and yet that is the calling, to be about this healing.

**The church bells** didn't just toll for the PEASE graduates, but they toll each Sunday, and they tolled again this past Monday, 49 times as we remembered those killed a year ago in the Orlando massacre.

**It seems to me we ring the bells** both to gather and to send:

to call us together for worship and renewal,

to call us together that we as community might be strengthened and fed to grapple with real pain, real crisis in our lives and in our land,  
but also to send us out, apostles, ones sent out to share good news, embodied hope and healing.

**Today we'll pray for the healing of the creation**, and our racial division is certainly part of this prayer.

Then we'll take time in the midst of our worship to use chalk and to go out and write messages of healing on the side walks in the vicinity of the church....

If you can't get around, it's fine to stay in your seats and create messages that'll later be placed on doors in our neighborhood—we've materials ready.

We'll call you back together by ringing the bells,

ringing the bells to remind us that we are gathered together to be fed at the table,

and that we are sent out as apostles to be part of the risky, vulnerable, vital healing in our community.

You... are called by name, fiercely loved, and sent out as God's beloved. Amen.