

“From Woe to Wow”

Liturgical Date: Proper 9 (C)

Primary Text: St. Luke 10:1-20

Intro:

Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. The primary text for today, the 4th Sunday after Pentecost is the Gospel Lesson from St. Luke 10. Have you ever felt like “woe is me”? And then later, maybe something great and possibly unexpected happened that changed your whole outlook. The title of today’s sermon is “From Woe to Wow” as we will examine the words of Christ as JESUS SPEAKS WOE TO ALL WHO REJECT HIM SO THAT BY REPENTANCE AND FAITH, HE TURNS OUR WOES TO WOW.

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Jesus was a man who would speak directly and strongly in many cases. We see that in our text for today. Jesus continues his journey to Jerusalem and many of the events on that journey, such as our Gospel for today, are only recorded in the Gospel according to St. Luke. Jesus sends out 70 disciples (or 72 by some translations) down the Jordan River Valley to preach and heal. He gives them specific instructions in verses 2-12 on what not to take and what to do on their mission.

One thing that really stands out in this text is what Jesus told the 70 disciples about how to act if they were rejected. God has an answer for unrepentant and lawless people. The disciples are to warn them that the kingdom of God has come near and to shake the dust off their feet as a sign of God’s judgment and then move onto the next town. Recalling the fiery

judgment on Sodom in the book of Genesis they are to say, “*it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city.*” (v 12).

Jesus then goes on to speak against 3 cities in particular. They are Capernaum, Chorazin (about an hour by foot north of Capernaum), and Bethsaida (3 miles southeast of Chorazin). Jesus also speaks against these cities in St. Matthew 11. The condemnation against Capernaum is especially strong and surprising (v15). Jesus had done much ministry there and it appears as though Capernaum thinks they are righteous city. Yet, Jesus says that they will “*be thrust down to hell*” (v15). All three of these cities are Jewish cities and Jesus contrasts them with the Gentile cities of Tyre and Sidon (v13). He says that if the works done in these Jewish cities had been done in the Gentile cities that the Gentile cities would have repented. Woe is spoken to these self-righteous and unrepentant cities even though the disciple’s message is one that will bring forgiveness and rejoicing. JESUS SPEAKS WOE TO ALL WHO REJECT HIM SO THAT BY REPENTANCE AND FAITH, HE TURNS OUR WOES TO WOW.

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We have done some studies, including the last year’s Wednesday Night Light class, with materials from a man named Todd Friel. He hosts a Christian radio and TV program. Each Wednesday his program is encounters that he has when he goes out to witness to people. He often goes to college campuses to talk to young people as you can often get access to public college campuses and these young people are taking in information and thinking about things as they form their opinions in young adulthood. On one show he was talking to a young man who had been to church some as a child. He had a basic knowledge of Christianity and he said that he believed in God, heaven, and hell. However, when confronted with the Law

he admitted that he was a sinner and may be on his way to hell. However, he believed that he did have “some good in him” and that he would worry about getting right with God later. This is a common reaction that you will get from people, even ones much older than college age, when you speak to them about spiritual things. In short, he was having too much fun right now living in sin to welcome Jesus into full control of his life.

Todd is concerned and explains that as JESUS SPEAKS WOE TO ALL WHO REJECT HIM SO THAT BY REPENTANCE AND FAITH, HE TURNS OUR WOES TO WOW. And that is what woe is really about. It is not pointing a self-righteous finger saying, “You are going to get yours!” But it is an impassioned plea for repentance and a deep regret that these individual’s sins are not covered by God’s grace at the present moment because they are rejecting that grace. Todd gently, but firmly explained as Jesus says in our Gospel text that those who have heard the Gospel and refuse God’s grace are in grave danger. We are all without excuse, but for those of us who have been in a Gospel-centered church and know the truth we literally playing with fire when we do not take Jesus at His word. The Gospel was shared with this young man, but still he was steadfast in his path. When we stubbornly cling to our sin, we face the stern judgment of God.

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However, thanks be to God that the 70 (and us) are sent not only to deliver the message of condemnation under the Law. As James 4: 6 says, “*God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble*”. The Gospel is also delivered. The message of God’s love for all of humanity is preached. We can rejoice as well. JESUS SPEAKS TO ALL WHO REJECT HIM SO

THAT BY REPENTANCE AND FAITH, HE TURNS OUR WOES TO WOW.

The 70 preach forgiveness. They speak peace to those who will receive them and the message they bring (v6). They heal the sick (v9). The 70 return to Jesus full of joy (v17). Jesus cautions them to not get too excited about things like healings and the casting out of demons. Yes, these are good things but the greatest thing is eternal salvation through Jesus Christ. Jesus says in verse 20, *“Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject to you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.”* Salvation is through Jesus Christ and what He has done. As the 2nd petition of the Lord’s Prayer says, *“Thy kingdom come.”* As the kingdom of God comes, the kingdom of Satan is defeated. As Christians, our names are written in the Book of Life spoken of in Revelation 21:27. Jesus is teaching the 70 that He is the source of life, forgiveness, and salvation. WOW, you can rejoice in that, rather than in what you have done.

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Once again we see the importance of evangelism and hearing the Gospel. Once again we see that saving work evangelism is not something that we do, but something God does.

Judgment is coming for Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. Judgment is coming for the college student we heard about earlier. Maybe you got a little uncomfortable when I mentioned earlier about how even some of those who are attending church could be facing judgment. Church attendance is a sign that you are indeed a Christian, but it is not what makes you a Christian. But if we are in Bible teaching and preaching church, then we will hear both Law and Gospel. And in this preaching of the Word the Holy Spirit works. There is still time for the hard of heart and hypocrite to

repent. But we don't know how much time we have until the judgment and we should be ready for it at all times, but God in His mercy has given us this day to experience His forgiveness. The words of woe spoken by Jesus are not the final words. The final words were spoken by our Lord Jesus on the cross when He said, "It is finished." God through the suffering and death of His only begotten Son has provided for our eternal salvation. JESUS SPEAKS WOE TO ALL WHO REJECT HIM SO THAT BY REPENTANCE AND FAITH, HE TURNS OUR WOES TO WOW.

Article 28 of the Augsburg Confession references verse 16 of our Gospel lesson for today. *"He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me, and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me."* God has established His Church on earth to forgive the sins of the penitent. Earlier in the service we had a corporate confession of our sins. Then we heard the absolution spoken on the behalf of God. The penitent can have full confidence that upon their true confession that the words of Absolution were as from Christ Himself. The Church preaches the Word of God and "faith comes by hearing." The Church administers the Sacraments, which work forgiveness of sins and the salvation of our souls.

So rejoice and say "Wow"! Wow, Jesus has paid the price for your sins! Wow, your names are written in heaven! Woe is not the final word! Wow is the final word! Rejoice! Again I say rejoice!

Amen.