



June 14, 2020
The 2nd Sunday after Pentecost • Proper 6A
Matthew 9:35—10:23
The Rev. Emily Williams Guffey

These past few days as our house has been without power, I don't even know how many times I've said or thought:

"Ahh, I don't have power, so I *can't* open my email."
"Ahh, I don't have power, so I *can't* use my phone because it's out of batteries."
"Ahh, I don't have power, so I *can't* cook food or wash dishes."
"Ahh, I don't have power, so I *can't* spend much time in the house, because it gets too hot."

How many times in the past forty-eight hours have I said or thought, "I don't have power, so I *can't*?"

Now, electricity and internet are more necessary than ever as we are staying in our homes and relying nearly completely upon our digital connections with one another—so, being without electricity and internet is a real problem. And for all of you who also have been experiencing that this week, I am right there with you!

So, it has stood out to me that in this Gospel passage, Jesus gives his disciples...what?...he gives them *power!* And it is a very specific kind of power. He gives them *authority*, which means power with a purpose, power that's on a mission. And he sends them out. We lose this in the English translation, but the Greek *apostolos* means to be sent out with a mission: not just randomly, not casually, not leisurely, but to be sent out with a *mission*. And that is what the disciples become: they become apostles, sent out with a mission.

And, here we are in our homes, sent out. We are not gathered in the church building, so you might say we are sent out—and, we better remember what our mission is, what our purpose is. Jesus reminds us that just as he sent out those first apostles, so he sends us: to cast out demons, to send away unclean spirits, to proclaim resurrection—to look for resurrection!—to practice our faith in the new abundant life that tramples death. And he sends them out specifically—let us hear this—*specifically* to the lost sheep.

Now remember, our Jesus, the Good Shepherd, will instantly drop everything he has in his hand, he will leave the ninety-nine sheep (he'll say, "Hang on a minute, gotta go") and he will pursue that one lost sheep. He will seek out with everything he has the one who is lost, the one who is hurting, the one who is afraid, the one who is wounded. And he will listen. And he will give everything he has to that one—because there is no such thing as being a single sheep. (Even grammatically that doesn't make any sense, does it?) We sheep are made for one another and we are in it together.

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So, the first thing we must do is to consider: who are the lost sheep, right now?

The lost sheep could be any one of us. Many of us are lost sheep in our own ways. We are hurting, wounded, grieving, or afraid. Whenever we feel like that, know and trust and believe that Jesus is right there with you, and that you are not alone.

I also believe that lost sheep, in a parable that Jesus might tell us right now, are our black and brown brothers and sisters who suffer injustice by the sin of racism.

Lost sheep right now include our lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer siblings who also suffer the injustice of unjust legislation.

Who are lost sheep? Go, go, go to them, to one another, with a purpose and a mission: to name the evils that are all around us. Jesus tells the disciples and tells us, “Remember, I am sending you out with a mission, with a purpose, and I am sending you out like sheep among wolves.” There is evil, there is injustice, there is hatred, there is fear all around us.

Yet we need not fear what we would say, nor underestimate our own power to speak out and to take care of one another, because that is precisely the power that Jesus gives us.

Whenever we’re running low on energy – or electricity – whenever we’re distracted, whenever we’re down, Jesus replenishes us. Jesus gives us what we need. He tells those disciples, “Now, what you need is not what you think you need. It is not gold, it’s not silver. It’s not two tunics—it’s maybe only one. It’s a pair of sandals and feet that are meant for walking. And that’s about it.”

He gives us what we need, and it’s not usually what we think we need. Yet all of that is to remind us what are about and what are to do: which is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind, and all our strength, and to love our neighbor as our self. To seek out the lost sheep among us and to sit and listen. To reach out and ask, “Where does it hurt?” To name the evils that surround us and give all that we have to eradicate them.

That is the power, the authority, and the faith that we have—and let us never forget it. Amen.