

Gospel and Sermon Transcript -3rd Sunday After Pentecost - June 14, 2026

00:00

As we gather today, a few things of significance, I think.

00:04

One of those being that as we talk about how the gospel shapes the life of the church,

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today we hear about Jesus being moved with compassion because he sees sheep without a shepherd.

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And the thing to note about that is rather than saying we need more shepherds, he says we need more workers.

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I'm struck by a number of conversations that we've had this week both here and at First Lutheran.

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And this is kind of the sermon, but not all of it maybe.

00:51

but you think about how in our lives we need more medical workers, more contractors,

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more of almost every kind of worker you can imagine for the common good. So we

01:05

will reflect during the sermon a bit on our particular situation here at St.

01:11

Matthew's and how we have responded to the need for more workers and maybe some

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ideas for potential responses. Today's service is one that has been in the

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planning for some time wanting to sing both spiritual songs as well as gospel

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music doing that because we know that Juneteenth is coming up toward the end

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of the week which is a celebration of the emancipation of enslaved peoples and

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And if we think about it, yes, it is a celebration that was part of the North American story,

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but also, I think, has some implications for much of Europe and the known world.

02:00

So we celebrate a day of liberation with these songs.

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the ninth chapter.

03:03

Jesus went about to all the cities and villages teaching in the synagogues and

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and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness.

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When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them because they were harassed and helpless,

03:21

like sheep without a shepherd.

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Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.

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Therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

03:37

the Gospel of our Lord.

03:40

Won't you be seated.

The Sermon

04:07

There's words in this Gospel that we don't speak much in English and have kind of lost their oomph.

04:16

Especially if you look at the languages that contributed to the Bible that weren't English like Hebrew and Greek.

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To be harried was the same sense as being flawed, which the Roman Empire was pretty good at.

04:39

To be harassed was to be put or squashed down, as in slavery. The Roman Empire was pretty good at that.

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So was Pharaoh's Egypt.

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So was the slave trade in England, Spain, Portugal, now the Netherlands, and the U.S.

05:11

We've been recently watching on BritBox, I think it is, Britain's historic towns.

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And it's striking how often the host finds herself confronting the reality of slavery,

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that for towns that grew and prospered and became so integral in the history of a people,

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the imprint of slavery is everywhere.

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I thought I paid attention at school, but maybe I didn't.

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Well, yeah, my mind wanders, so there is that.

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But do you remember the story of Sir Francis Drake?

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I thought I remembered.

05:58

We were taught in like grade three or four or two, he was the one who circumnavigated

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the globe.

06:03

Well, yeah.

06:06

But what we were not prompted to recite was that Sir Francis Drake was actually a paid

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pirate by Elizabeth I. His job was to raid Spanish ships and take their

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fortunes, by the way stolen from people in the Caribbean and in the North of

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Africa and the Americas. That was his job, was to steal, to plunder, and in that

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circumnavigation of the globe that we were supposed to be so excited about, his

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This job was to abduct human beings and these human beings would be sold into slavery.

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I think Lilly's teaching today takes on extra significance doesn't it?

06:59

What do people do who are literally harassed, squashed down, and punished for expressing their faith, their culture, and their humanity?

07:17

They somehow hold out hope and they resist.

07:28

Evidently, things have not changed much.

07:33

I have a whole harangue about trillionaires.

07:36

So is it OK if I just tell you I have one and not go into it?

07:41

Is that all right?

07:42

I'll spare you.

07:45

I will say this, though, and this is not partisan politics.

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This is gospel justice, that as those

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who become increasingly wealthy, obscenely wealthy,

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that comes at somebody else's expense.

08:02

And usually the first and the worst affected

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are those who are vulnerable anyway.

08:08

Ask anybody who's had their, say, benefits taken away

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as a friend of ours fights for every single day

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because of her son's traumatic brain injury.

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Every single day she wonders, is this the day

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that her government is going to take away those funds

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and divert them to war or divert them

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to the pockets of yet another wannabe trillionaire.

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And to think that was only part of the rant.

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That was the Cole's notes.

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So imagine the sense of compassion,

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literally the moving from the gut level

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that Jesus experiences when he sees something similar.

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Sheep without a Shepherd is a line that is inspired from the 34th chapter of the Book of Ezekiel,

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and one that finds its way into Matthew's Gospel.

09:04

And it's intriguing to me that Jesus doesn't pray for more and better shepherds, but he prays for workers.

09:13

And who are these workers?

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Well, my answer may seem like it's coming from left field if not public broadcasting, but do you remember Fred Rogers?

09:28

Who counseled little children that when they were afraid that they would go and look for the helpers?

09:36

The helpers are the workers and maybe we as adults too

09:42

Need to look for the helpers look for the workers and in some cases be those workers

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I don't know if you can handle yet another reference to the regime south of us, but it's

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kind of personal in that one of our closest friends actually has taken training and has

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volunteered that when the immigration enforcement comes to their town and takes people, she is part

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of a group that bears witness and part of a group that organizes food and

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medical needs and anything for any family member left after someone has been

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taken from their home. I would say that's a helper. That's a worker.

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And quite honestly, I don't know if I have the stuff to do that kind of work.

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I would like to think so, but I don't really know.

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We look at the enormity of the need in our world in this congregation and we wonder,

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well, what is our response?

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How can we be the worker?

11:01

How can we be the helper?

11:03

Especially as some among us are beginning to age, some of us have our time stretched

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beyond its normal limits. Some of us have so much on our plates that we get preoccupied.

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The other reality is that there aren't as many of us to lean on to do this helping and

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to do this work. So the questions become, how are we part of the answer to that prayer

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into the world that God so loves.

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The answers aren't easy and maybe they're overly general and overly simplistic

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but I'd like to feedback a few things that I've seen in our time living here in this region and being among you.

12:01

One of the things that the congregation here has done

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looked for the helpers and

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tried to figure out well how can

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draw alongside and partner.

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We have volunteers, for example, who go to Holy Trinity for the breakfast program, which is a fairly new program.

12:19

About four years now, I think.

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I think we can look no farther than our ascended leadership to for initiatives that are very important ones.

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And this congregation has done that.

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Supporting Canadian Lutheran world relief, for example.

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calling for the just treatment of those who are displaced.

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Our work comes down to

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feeding the hungry, tending the sick, welcoming the stranger, those three things.

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But under that,

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there are so many

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is to be involved and to be connected and so many different partners that that feels overwhelming.

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And so one of the responses of the congregation as I've seen it is to say

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We know we can't do it all.

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We need to isolate a few things that we can do.

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For example, the Niagara Hospice House, the Walker House.

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A fairly new initiative for us.

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So part of it is looking for those partners.

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Knowing we can't do it all, but picking one or two things that are near and dear to our hearts that we know are

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part of that rule and realm of God, part of that harvest field that Jesus speaks

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of. It's also true about how we do our work. That maybe there was a day that we

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held picket signs. Maybe there was a day that we did a lot more actual cooking

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and serving of soup.

14:02

Well, as we change, maybe our approach changes, but may our hearts remain the same.

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Carrying that same sense of compassion, knowing what people are going through, and being willing to step out a little bit and to help.

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There are some things I think many of us can still do.

14:32

Anybody here have a phone?

14:37

Anybody here like to write letters?

14:40

Oh, where is he going with this one?

14:43

Well, I'm intrigued just now about people running for provincial office who are promising better health care.

14:54

I don't think I can be opposed to that.

14:57

But why do I have questions?

15:00

How is that going to happen?

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What's the plan, especially considering that the reason

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that most surgeries are delayed, if I read the sign

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that I'm going to go to hospital appropriately,

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is because there aren't enough anesthesiologists for one.

15:16

What's the plan?

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I think as a person of faith, I am both charged with

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and privileged to ask that question.

15:24

So I'll be writing some letters.

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I am under no illusions that my letters will get responses.

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Some of you know I've written some pretty,

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what's the word I'm looking for?

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Cranky letters?

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When Premier's tell us that the solution

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to the housing crisis is to go get a job,

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I guess I got offended.

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I don't know, go figure.

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I didn't get any response back when I wrote

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and said that maybe we need to be blessing the ports

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that are blaming them.

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So, I'm telling you that if you decide to write letters, first of all, a letter letter is better than email because they actually get read.

16:09

Second, though, is that you may or may not get a response.

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But the fact of the matter is, when you plant seeds, you don't really know what's going to germinate and what's not.

16:23

And so maybe part of our job is that seed planting, at least to say, "Oh, guess what?"

16:29

We noticed what you said back there.

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We noticed what the priorities are or are not."

16:37

So maybe that's part of the work as well.

16:40

Maybe that's how we become the helpers in our own ways as much as we can, as long as

16:46

we can.

16:49

Huh.

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Who said that?

16:52

Charles Wesley and then Jimmy Carter after him, but I don't know. I think it's worth repeating.

17:00

A bit of a reminder maybe and a way to conclude what is a rather here, there, and everywhere

17:08

bit of reflection on what it means to be a worker and what it means to be part of the

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Roman realm of God just now. Whenever somebody is baptized we have a special word of welcome

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at the end of the liturgy, right?

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The words have changed, but the idea is the same.

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When we welcome somebody of any age being baptized,

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we say we welcome you into the body of Christ,

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into the mission that we share for the life of the world.

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We've been welcomed into that ourselves.

17:46

We welcome others into that.

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We pray for more workers.

17:52

And even when it doesn't look like they're coming,

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we realize that we're praying to the Lord of the harvest,

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not to ourselves.

18:02

And we pray that maybe by the Spirit of God

18:05

that we'll be nudged just a bit to take on some of the work

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as we are led and as we are empowered.

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And why?

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Because God is a God of compassion

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and we are made in the image of God.

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Also, compassionate people.

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People yearning for what God yearns for,

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which is the restoration of all things.

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May it be so among us.

18:41

Amen.