

Sermon June 14, 2026

In Matthew 9:35-10:8, Jesus recognizes the scope of his ministry. It has always been an uphill climb to meet the needs of the people. Jesus has called the twelve disciples to share in the ministry. At first, this ministry is only to the Jewish people, their own people, to bring healing and cast out demons, and to proclaim that the reign of God is at hand. The passage continues with Jesus' instructions to take nothing extra, for those that they help ought to help them (the laborers deserve to be paid). But it won't be easy. They will be rejected, they will be ridiculed, and they will face persecution, but those who endure to the end will know the salvation of God.

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.'

Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax-collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Canan-ean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.

These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: 'Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, proclaim the good news, "The kingdom of heaven has come near." Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment.'

She Laughed

It was a hot and steamy day on June 19, 1865, in Galveston, Texas. The Civil War is over and the Emancipation Proclamation has been law for more than two years. But news was slow to reach the people. More than 250,000 people remain enslaved because no one told them they were free. Freedom has been declared, but not delivered. Justice has been promised, but not practiced.

Until the moment when a Union General steps forward and proclaims: "*All slaves are free.*"

Those words break forth like lightning. Some people gasp. Some stare in disbelief. Some begin to cry. Some begin to pray. Some begin to dance. Some just laugh outloud.

And some simply stand still, letting the truth sink in: The world has shifted. The chains are broken. Freedom has arrived.

This was the day that Juneteenth celebrations were born.

Juneteenth is not just a date. It is a testimony.

- ∞ A testimony that truth delayed is still truth.
- ∞ A testimony that justice postponed is not justice erased.
- ∞ A testimony that God's liberating work does not depend on human timetables.
- ∞ A testimony that freedom is both a divine promise and a human struggle.
- ∞ A testimony that faith endures and nothing is too wonderful for God.

And faith endures more than 150 years later. We live in a time when rights and opportunities are stripped away from the descendants of those slaves. A time when the largest Protestant denomination just voted to strip women from all leadership roles... a time when our LGBTQ siblings face discrimination and violence simply because of who they love. Yet we also live in a time

when faith endures. We reach back to the ancient stories that remind us of God's eternal presence... no matter how hard things may be, we are never alone. So, we shake our heads at the absurdity of our times, perhaps with a bitter laugh, and reclaim the promises:

Is anything too wonderful for our God?

I love that verse. It says everything, in 7 words. This is the root of our faith and all that we do. The Bible... our own personal stories of faith... they prove that one question to be true:

Is anything... absolutely anything... too wonderful for our God?

From the first creative moments, when sparks flew out of a big bang, lifting up mountains and digging out valleys... separating the pure and beautiful light out of the murky darkness... God showed us in that nothing is too wonderful for God.

Throughout history, God showed us how wonderful God can be. Like bringing forth a child to an elderly woman and beginning a promised legacy that lives on for all who call themselves the children of Abraham and Sarah. Even as Sarah bitterly laughed in disbelief, God showed her how wonderful God's Holy Love can be.

Is anything too wonderful for God?

Experiencing the fulfillment of God's wonderful promises can take time. Those enslaved Texans waited for years... and the path was not easy. And, it took many years for Sarah's son to be born, and Sarah wasted too much time manipulating others to try and make God's promises come true. And when the time came? She couldn't believe it. She snorted...she laughed... in the face of God

And yet, faith continues. Sometimes we stumble in the wrong direction... sometimes we think we know what God has in mind, only to realize how lost we are.

We wait... and sometimes it's hard to remember that little question found in the earliest stories of our faith: and yet faith continues...

Is anything too wonderful for our God?

And with the knowledge that nothing is too wonderful for God, we are sent out. We, the church... we who are the Body of Christ. We are sent out to continue Christ's work in the world. We, the church, are the messengers of all the wonderful things that God can do.

It's a great time to be the church!

It's a great time to be the church, whenever we are sent out to do God's work.

Jesus said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few." And there is so much work to be done. Whether we are a church of 5 or 500 members, we are called to spread the good news of God's Wonderful Love... preparing new disciples to go out too.

Where else should the church be than out there?

Out there, where people need us. All of us. Our Gospel lesson tells us "When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." So he sends us out... into the crowds... as the Body of Christ.

Jesus sends us today. Where else should we be but out there, where there is so much work to be done to bring God's Wondrous Love out of the shadows and into the pure and beautiful light.

It might sound overwhelming... there is so much work to be done. With God on our side, what seems overwhelming to us becomes opportunities... not problems. Right now, we are surrounded by opportunities for the church to be the visible witness of the kingdom of God. All you need to do is be willing to go out as modern-day disciples, and God will give you what you need... no matter how long it takes.

Today, Jesus sends us out! We are sent by the one who loves us. We are sent out as the living Body of Christ to heal and cast out and stand up for justice and hope.

We are the holy messengers, sent out by God, spreading the God News of God's Wonderful Love, everywhere we go... not just here, but out there! You have been called... you have been commissioned. Will you go?

This is a great time to be the church! Is anything too wonderful for God?

Pastoral Prayer

Holy One, You gather us this morning with the quiet insistence of grace— a grace that does not rush, a grace that does not shame, a grace that keeps calling us back to the truth of who we are and the truth of who You are.

We come carrying the week in our bodies: the headlines that unsettled us, the conversations that lingered longer than we wanted, the griefs we keep trying to outrun, the joys we barely had time to savor. Hold all of it with us now. Let nothing be wasted in Your presence.

For those who are weary, breathe rest into their bones. For those who are anxious, steady their trembling hearts. For those who are grieving— loss of loved ones, loss of certainty, loss of hope— wrap them in a tenderness that does not let go.

We pray for our communities, for neighborhoods where sirens ring louder than laughter, for families stretched thin by bills and broken systems, for all who are navigating injustice that should never have been theirs to bear. Stir in us a holy impatience for the world as it is, and a holy courage to help shape the world as it could be.

We pray for leaders—local, national, global— that wisdom would rise above ego, that compassion would outweigh convenience, that justice would be the very ground on which decisions are made.

We pray for Your church, that we would be a people who listen before we speak, who repair before we defend, who welcome before we judge. Make us brave enough to love in public, persistent enough to hope when hope feels thin, and humble enough to follow where Your Spirit leads.

And for each person gathered here— in this sanctuary, online, or in spirit— meet them exactly where they are. Let them feel seen. Let them feel held. Let them feel renewed.

Gather all our prayers—spoken and unspoken— into the wide mercy of Christ, who walks with us still, who teaches us to pray, and who calls us always toward life.

Sending Forth

One: Go now, walking with purpose— with Christ beside you, the Spirit before you, and God’s love within you.

Many: May our steps be steady, your heart be brave, and our path be filled with opportunities to bless and be blessed.

One: Go in peace and walk in the way of love. Your strength may fail. But God’s love never will!