Slide 1: Casting Out Unclean Spirits 2017 06 18

Matthew 9:35-10:8 Pr. H. Adachi

May the Holy Spirit be poured into people’s hearts in this sanctuary!

Slide 2: While I was studying at Luther Seminary, I noticed that, among my friends, there were Democrat and Republican Master of Divinity Candidates.

Slide 3: One of my friends, who was more Democrat-ish, had a high school classmate who was living in Texas and attending an Evangelical Protestant Christian Church. There was a reunion and she was excited about him becoming an Evangelical Lutheran Church in America pastor. But for some reason, she did not know the ELCA well. She started expressing her own decidedly Republican opinions and assumed that he, my friend, was also a Republican.

Slide 4: He could not continue listening to her without informing her of his political stance...he started to appreciate her willingness to share and without arguing her point. She was very surprised and said “I have never met someone who is an Evangelical Christian but not a Republican.”

Slide 5: I have a pastor friend who always advises people coming to her congregation, “Please do not assume that the person sitting next to you has the same understanding as you do about political, social justice or cultural issues.”

Slide 6: The Gospel text given today, had a very brief introduction about the 12 disciples. One of them was described as “Matthew, the tax collector” which means he was working on behalf of the Roman Empire. There was also “Simon, the Cananaean” who was a very devout Jew and against Roman Empire.

Slide 7: It is interesting that the chosen 12 disciples were not the same socially and politically. I believe Jesus is teaching us that even though we are different socially, politically, and culturally, we respect and love and serve each other for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ.

Slide 8: However, how can people who have different opinions belong to the same community of faith and serve the same Christ together?

Slide 9: In the Gospel text, there were words such as “unclean spirits” and “demons.” Let’s think about those words. In ancient times and also even in modern times, when most people feel a strong power or unseen force, they call them “Spirits.”

Slide 10: Especially in the age when the Bible was written, people thought that all sorts of diseases and sicknesses were caused by unclean spirits or demons. Even when they were not epidemic, those diseases separated the ill from healthy persons. And illness separated suffering people from the faithful and in the faithful’s eyes God as well, because people thought the sick to some degree deserved their fate.

Slide 11: In the latter centuries, since medicine has advanced, it is unlikely people think that the cause of sickness is demons or unclean spirits. However, even now people think that there are powers or forces that destroy the God/human relationship or separate humanity from God. I think we may call those forces unclean spirits or demons and those forces are hidden in our minds and words we express.

Slide 12: On the other hand, there are forces or powers that bring people closer to each other and closer to God. As such, the Christian church has identified those positive forces as the work of the Holy Spirit. Or we may call those powers themselves as the Holy Spirit. Just two weeks ago, in the text from Acts 2, we learned that the Holy Spirit enabled people to understand others who speak different languages, that is an example of how the Holy Spirit brings people closer to each other.

Slide 13: In this age, there are also unseen forces that connect people who are different politically, socially, and culturally. The Holy Spirit allows people who speak different languages, whose ancestors came from different cultures or who are from different generations to come together and learn from each other.

Slide 14: To be honest, a weird thing happened last week. Last Monday many members of Resurrection received news that Pauline Cummings passed away. Two days later, I was attending a national church gathering and met a person from the East Coast who knew Pauline & Bob Cummings well. He said Bob and Pauline were the leaders of Resurrection who strongly advocated the importance of LCR’s Japanese Ministry.

Slide 15: I was not sure why I heard such a story, while I was preparing the sermon for this Sunday, from a person who has not been a member of Resurrection. And as you know yesterday, there was a memorial service for Nadene Weber. She was one of many at Resurrection who truly welcomed Japanese people in this congregation and especially encouraged me and prayed for me to proceed with my seminary education. I see acts of the Holy Spirit over the Cumming’s family and also over Nadene and her family as well.

Slide 16: Based on Scripture and what Jesus did to gather his disciples together, I do not believe that the Christian Church is the place where only people of similar backgrounds should get together.

Slide 17: God, the father, Jesus, the son, and the Holy Spirit is casting out the unclean spirits in the hearts of people who tend to think that only the same people should get together and enables people who are different to welcome and learn from one another, so that we become closer to the Lord whom we all worship as Christians. Amen.