**“Give without Pay”**

Psalm 100

Exodus 19:2-8

Romans 5:6-15

Matthew 9:35—10:8 (9-20)

Pentecost 3

Jesus called to Him His disciples and sent them out, instructing them, “Proclaim as you go, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ You **received without paying**; **give without pay**.”

Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

**Bridge**

You may, or may not, know that this is “Flag Day” weekend. When the American Revolution broke out in 1775, colonists weren’t fighting **united under a single (common) flag**. Regiments participating in the war fought under **their own flags**. The “Second Continental Congress” met in Philadelphia to create a “Continental Army” **united in the battle**. This led to the creation of what was, essentially, the first “**American**” **flag** … the “**Continental** **Colors**”.

The very **Kingdom of Heaven** was “**at hand**” in the Son of God incarnate, Christ Jesus, having **come to save the world by redeeming it with His own bloodshed** (that was the revolution that was happening). He came to “**heal**” and **make life possible where there as death** (“**raising the dead**” … even those **looking alive, but not**). **Freedom**, then, was from the tyranny of **our sinful selves**, and that had to be fought-for and **won**. And, then, that had to be **honored** and **talked about / received as grace** so that **all could be saved by it** … which required (after the solo victory of **Jesus** **upon a cross**) an **army** deliberate to **fight united** everywhere behind and under the **banner and flag** of the **“revolutionary” Message of Redemption.** That **Message** was **the Gospel**. And while the Church honors the American flag with all that it positively brings to mind and motivates, it **waves** **most-vigorously** the Good News that is of **God in the person and work and promises of Jesus dying on our behalf (so as to save us)**, then **our connecting us to that by the gift of grace in baptism**. Matthew (probably the first of the Gospel writers) speaks **that** **Message** in 28 chapters of **His witness to it** and, then, announces how **disciples are made to be under God’s banner** “by (the Church and **faithful** parents) baptizing in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching (**Words**) everything that Jesus had commanded and said”.

**Text**

“**Laborers**” (a **synonym** **for “disciples”** yet carrying it on to the next step, identifying **workers** and **warriors** **in the kingdom duty-bound** and **activated**, **active** and **verbally** **speaking God’s Words**. “**Go, proclaiming as you go**” Jesus said. Disciples ("Laborers”) are to **do**, and **do** **obediently**, **determined to do as Jesus said, to baptize and raise our kids to appreciate that, teaching them to, themselves, be disciples (“laborers”) to work toward that effort for others’ benefit**. We’re to **do** and **speak, first, where we’re at**. Jesus said to the original “Laborers”: “Go nowhere among the Gentiles (yet), and enter no town of the Samaritans (yet) but go rather to the **lost sheep of the house of Israel**” which was their home and neighbors. Start in yours then, (homes and marriages and families and neighborhoods … among friends) and encourage the brethren (your brothers and sisters also in the Church) **toward doing their duty** and **speaking as they are called to**. Start **there** … then venture out, again always “**proclaiming as you go**”.

And **don’t be surprised that you’ll be opposed in that** … but **don’t stop the activity**. What follows just beyond our text (the call) is Jesus instruction for how to do all of this: “Behold, I am sending you out **as sheep in the midst of wolves**, so **be wise as serpents and innocent as doves**”, but “**have no fear**” and **don’t be surprised by the opposition**. “Don’t, even, fear those” (He says) “who can kill the body but cannot kill the soul, because even the hairs upon your head are all numbered” by the Heavenly Father … so why worry? And be prepared for **family** to oppose you. Jesus said, “I have come to **set a man against his father**, and **a** **daughter against her mother**, and **a person’s enemies will be those of his own household**”, yet **BAPTIZE** and **SPEAK**. **Raise the banner and fly high the flag of God’s Gospel**, and (with it) **life eternal, and it begun here**.

And that Gospel is **this**: Romans says that “**while WE were still weak**, **at the right time**, Christ died **for the ungodly**” (which **was us**). “God shows His love for **US** in that **while** **WE were still sinners**, **Christ died FOR US**.” We ought, then, **really to understand and appreciate** (so **tell** and **teach** and **pass-onward**) the gift (blessed beyond measure) that is **the Gospel**, **freely gotten by us WITHOUT PAYING**.

**Concisely** that Gospel gift is spoken-of in our Matthew reading, the last sentence (verse 8 of chapter 10): “**You RECEIVED without paying**” Jesus reminds us, so then asks just the one thing (because of it) that’s an obvious outgrowth and makes for the “labor” of discipleship: “**GIVE mercy and grace (for God’s sake) without pay!**” **Grace** we’ve been given was free and undeserved. **WE** (aside from His mercy upon us) were “**weak**” and “**ungodly**”, undeserving of His favor toward us. But in our weakness, “**Christ died for us**”. **Freely** we have **gained**, and **freely** we ought always to **do for Him** and **peak for Him** the Gospel that we, ourselves, freely received. Baptize, proclaim and teach … instill the **service of God’s kingdom**. So **give** without any thought of gain **other than to give God glory for what He done for you** …

… and the Lord’s always the best example of that first and foremost (with Divine Perfection). What He **did Himself, He grants us to participate in (wills it and expects it** … even **leading us into all our appropriate battles)**. Our text began with **Him**: “Jesus **went** throughout all the cities and villages, **teaching** in their synagogues and **proclaiming the Gospel of the kingdom**. When He saw the crowds, He **had compassion for them**, because they **were harassed and helpless, like sheep without proper shepherding**”, and then He **acted** with, both, His legs and His mouth, then trained and sent others and authorized them to further work / labor in the kingdom of Heaven as His disciples. **He made sure** that “**all**” **could** “**be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth**” using others to carry on (follow) in that mission. Workers / laborers / disciples / Godly parents, all **continue** what’s still documented as the Acts of the Apostles.

**Application**

And doing our duty as **freely-made** laborers in God’s kingdom **makes** **us honor the flag of a faithful earthly government all the more**. “Without pay”, Christian disciples see and do for neighbors of all colors and situations nobly because **that cause** is governed by **God**. **GOD RULES wherever the rules are Good**.

So, the flag of the Gospel is the **first one** we honor and fly, saluting **it**. “The harvest is plentiful” in that, “but the laborers are few, therefore” (Jesus said) pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to **send out laborers into His harvest**”, and that’s praying for **our own faithfulness and eternal USEFULNESS by action and Words … it’s us praying for us in that, as well as others in that**.

We live in a country and towns and families and social relationships that need **our faithful (Godly) action** and **His Words** brought to bear on pandemics and social tensions. **Wisdom (it-from-above)** needs brought-out by us, and God’s Words need spoken by us. The hymn (today) reminded us of that call from Jesus **to us as well as to others that we can help embolden**. So pray, also, for ourselves in that call. Changing the “you’s” to “me’s and “us’s” in “Hark, the Voice of Jesus Crying” (using its last verse), let’s pray (as we sang, but now prayerfully speaking aloud and together) for also ourselves and our carrying out of our duty:

“Let none hear **me** idly saying, ‘there is nothing I can do,’ while the multitudes are dying and the Master calls for **me**. Take **my** task He gives **me** gladly, let His work **my** pleasure be; answer quickly when He calleth, ‘Here am **I** … send **me**, send **me**!’”

In +Jesus’ name. Amen.