

Luke 10:1-9 • May 31, 2026 • Sermon Manuscript & Notes

Dear local preacher,

Grace and peace to you from our savior Jesus!!

Thank you for leading worship on this Sunday of Synod Assembly. It is an absolute gift to the rostered minister or synod authorized minister serving in your congregation to be able to be away on this day. It is a chance for them to be able to worship with colleagues in ways that are not possible for them on any other day of the year.

The scripture reading for this sermon is provided in this manuscript. If readings are offered during your worship, please also read the scripture from Luke 10 in order for the sermon to speak to this particular text and the Synod Assembly theme that is for every congregation of our synod.

Finally, I'm grateful for you and the proclamation of the good news of our Savior Jesus the Christ that will happen through you on this day! Thank you and blessings in your preaching.

Serving in Christ together,

Bishop Craig

Please share this greeting from me before reading the gospel from Luke.

First of all, I want to offer a few notes of thanksgiving from Bishop Craig. Bishop Craig offers his thanks and praise for our willingness to allow our rostered minister or synod authorized minister to be at Synod Assembly this Sunday. Synod Assembly happens once a year. Believe it or not, this is the only Sunday of the year when our rostered ministers and synod authorized ministers are able to be together in the same space, at the same time, for a worship service where they don't need to do anything except to be present.

Words cannot express what a gift that is for them.

Thank you.

This year Synos Assembly is meeting in beautiful Watford City at one of the best conference centers in our state – the Roughrider Center. And by now, we have probably elected a new bishop.

And finally, again on this Synod Assembly weekend, Bishop Craig offers his thanks and praise to each of us who calls

one of the nearly 160 congregations of the Western North Dakota Synod our faith home.

He offers thanks and praise for our financial and prayerful support of our shared ministry and mission through local congregations, the synod, and our churchwide communities.

He also offers thanks and praise for our support of rostered ministers, synod authorized ministers, and elected volunteers who serve with us throughout the year.

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“After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. He said to them, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Go on your way, See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals, and greet no one on the road.

Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this house!’ And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the laborer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; cure the sick who are there, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’”

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The theme of this year's Western North Dakota Synod Assembly is Walking Together based upon the 10th chapter of the gospel of Luke. In this chapter, Jesus sends out seventy followers ahead of him into the towns and places he intends to visit. And before they go, he gives them instructions that are at same time simple and unsettling.

Go in pairs.

Carry very little with you.

Expect hardship. This journey will not be easy all the time.

And always...offer peace. Always.

It is a fitting text for a church like ours who has been gathered this weekend under the theme "Walking Together."

Because from the very beginning, Jesus never imagined discipleship to be solitary experience. A life of faith is not about Jesus and me, in a transactional way. Jesus always sends people together. Two by two. Companion beside companion. Friend beside friend. Witness beside witness.

No one is sent alone.

And perhaps that is one of the most important things for the church in 2026 to hear again.

Because we are living in a time and place in human history and in a culture that rewards independence, strength, and self-sufficiency. We've all heard the saying 'pick yourself up by your bootstraps.' Even the church can fall into the temptation of believing that ministry and mission depend only on a few strong leaders, a few gifted congregations, or a few people carrying impossible tasks on behalf of everyone else.

Jesus sends the first disciples, and you and me today, out in pairs because the mission and ministry of the church was never meant to rest on one set of shoulders.

We belong to one another.

In our congregations, we walk with one another by supporting neighboring congregations who are struggling.

Pastors, deacons, and synod authorized ministers support one another through grief and exhaustion.

Lay leaders step up to lead in moments when they feel uncertain or unprepared.

Communities gather around families after loss and death, after fires and floods, after we hear a diagnoses that no one wants to hear.

The church is at its best not when it appeared strongest, but when people refuse to let one another walk alone.

That is how Jesus sends us.

Together.

But Jesus is also honest about the work before them. Before us still today.

“The harvest is plentiful,” he says, “but the laborers are few.” And then even more starkly: “I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves.”

Jesus does not pretend that our mission and ministry will be easy. He does not promise comfort or control. He does not tell them that every town will welcome them, or every person will listen, or every effort will succeed.

The church knows something about that reality, doesn't it?

Many of our congregations have been through difficult days, months, or years.

Time that is marked by uncertainty and change.

Times when congregations have wondered about their future.

Times when leaders have grown weary.

Times when conflict, division and political chaos that are part of the wider world have found their way into the body of Christ.

And yet Jesus still sends his people.

Not because the path is easy, but because the world still needs what God has given the church to carry.

Theologian and pastor Gina Burkhart writes that Jesus sends his followers with “empty backpacks, the barest of directions,” and with vulnerability instead of power.

That’s a fantastic image because it reminds us that the mission of Christ has never depended primarily on institutional strength or worldly authority.

The disciples are not sent out to dominate. To conquer another community or nation. They are sent out to bless and serve.

They arrive empty-handed except for the peace that God has given to them through Jesus, the savior of the world.

And maybe that is one of the hardest lessons for the church to learn. We want certainty. Strategies. Security. Proof that everything will work out exactly as we hope.

But instead, Jesus sends ordinary people who trust that God is with them and already at work ahead of them.

Ordinary people. You. Me.

That's who carries the gospel.

Not perfect people.

Not fearless people.

Not people with all the answers.

Ordinary people who love their neighbors. Ordinary people who show up for their neighbors when their neighbors need them to show up. Ordinary people who trust that the Spirit of God can still do remarkable things through simple acts of grace, mercy, kindness, and faithfulness. And at the center of all of it...is peace.

“Whatever house you enter,” Jesus says, “first say, ‘Peace to this house.’” Not judgment. Not fear. Not condemnation. Peace to this house. The peace of Christ.

The peace that says you are not abandoned.

The peace that says mercy and grace are still possible.

The peace that reminds weary souls that God has not given up on this world.

In a divided and anxious time, our calling to bring the peace of Christ matters deeply.

After all, the truth of the gospel is that the church does not exist merely to preserve itself. The church exists to carry the peace of Christ into neighborhoods, schools, hospitals, farms, oil fields, classrooms, and homes.

Into places of loneliness.

Into places of conflict.

Into places where people have forgotten that they are beloved by God.

And sometimes that peace will be welcomed.

Sometimes it will not. Jesus is honest about that too.

But the calling remains the same.

Keep walking together.

Keep blessing.

Keep proclaiming peace.

Walk together.

Care for one another.

Do not lose heart when the road becomes difficult.

And wherever Christ sends you next, may you always know that Christ's peace goes with you.

Amen.