

June 14, 2020 Sermon  
Matthew 9:35-10:23

Have you ever known anyone who could do everything they set out to do without some kind of help? I know there are people in this world that we see daily and week to week and we wonder how they do what they do, but are they really doing it alone? Is anyone *really* doing everything of life, on their own?

Let's take a look at teachers. We all have our favorite teacher; that teacher who helped us in our struggles, encouraged us when we thought we couldn't do any better than we were already doing, put us in our place, gently, when we needed it, but how do you think they became your favorite teacher?

I doubt your favorite teacher went home every afternoon, changed into comfortable clothing and propped themselves in front of the tv for the rest of the day. Your favorite teacher had to grade papers, come up with more lessons for the next day, and maybe...just maybe...it was hard for them to do the things that made them your favorite teacher, and so they would need to talk to a friend or family member in order to continue to do what they do.

What about farmers? They work long, hard hours and they're out in the field all by themselves, but without that tractor and all the equipment, and hardware stores and tractor supply businesses and seed and feed stores, it would be even *more* difficult. Right?

And what about the weather? A lot of plantings and harvestings rely on good weather. You may know farmers as being friendly types that always smile and wave to you on the way to or from their fields, but we don't *always* know what's going on behind that smile. I'm sure there are times, when their day ends without the assurance of better days ahead, or the idea that there ARE better days ahead, they just don't know when they will arrive.

So, what do those farmers do? They talk to *other* farmers who are in the same boat. They talk about what they've done, what they've got left to do, and they lift one another up. They *minister* to one another, knowing that sharing with one another gives them a better outlook on life.

What about parents raising children? Raising children has NEVER been easy. There's no manual for raising children. It's pretty much hit and miss. The thing that made raising children hardest for me, was that once I said something to them, I pretty much had to stick to what I said, because if I didn't, they would be confused by the rules.

And I'm sure I'm not the *only* one that had days where I would rather just sit and twiddle my thumbs and let them go, than have one more issue to deal with. So, what did I do? I called my mother, who would assure me after long chats that I was doing the right thing and I couldn't give up. I had to keep at it! Stay the course!

I don't know of *anyone*, at least in *my* little corner of the world, who has done *everything* in life, completely on their own. There is always SOMEONE there to encourage us in our helplessness. There is always someone available to speak to when we feel lost and alone. There is always someone to lift us up and care for us in our distress.

"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."

Think about how it would feel, after years of doing what you do without *any* help, or *any* encouragement. Think about your job, or your vocation, and times when you may have been harassed by others who were just sure you weren't doing it right, or that you were doing fine but you could do better, or maybe they thought you had no business doing what you did, or that maybe you were getting paid way too much for the meager service you provided. Think about how you might feel if others treated you less than.

We have all been doing that to each other for years, now. Instead of showing compassion for others, we find some reason or excuse as to why *others* don't deserve what *we* have. Instead of giving without complaint, we sometimes expect something in return. We may not say it out loud, but that feeling is there. But good deeds should be done without thought of repayment.

“When he (Jesus) saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”

We have seen a lot of harassed and helpless people this year. 2020 has not been our finest hour, as finest hours go. We had no idea we would be confined to our homes. We had no idea how many lives would be lost, how many states would find themselves under piles and piles of work, trying to find needed supplies for hospitals and *their* workers.

We had no idea that we would be confined for such a long period of time that people would begin to get so antsy they began to demand to be let out of their homes. And we had no idea that doing something as simple as buying groceries was going to be so anxiety-ridden.

Admit it, we have all felt helpless for a very long time. We ask one another how long this might last. We want to know when we'll be able to sit down in a crowded restaurant or go on a movie date, or simply go to our house of worship without worry of carrying a disease or catching one. Helplessness. It's not weakness, it's just...helplessness. It's frustrating.

And then, we have a rising up of people because, other than being rendered helpless by a virus, one of God's creations was snuffed out like a candle on a birthday cake. Sometimes when you feel helpless, the only thing left to do is rise up.

If you think the protests were not part of the kingdom of God, you might want to think again. And we don't get to see a lot of the good stuff, but there were churches involved...those who were helping with water, food, directions to those who needed rest, and there were even people who opened their homes to protesters who needed a place to lay their weary heads.

The Pastor of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Minneapolis, MN, Ingrid Rasmussen, tells the story of a man who approached her the day after terrible fires raged through Minneapolis, and was carrying a lantern. He was with an organization associated with and founded by Native Americans. Their building, which was across the street from the church, and completed just late last year, burned to the ground from a fire that had spread from next door.

Brian Dragonfly had stopped to look at the building, found it to still be burning in some parts and decided to “capture the fire.” He had that fire in his lantern. He asked Pastor Rasmussen, if Holy Trinity would keep the fire and tend to it until they could rebuild. He thought it might bring some comfort to the Native American community to know the fire was being carried.

He and Pastor Rasmussen carried the lantern into the sanctuary, where she ran to find a candle to share the flame, and keep it going. The two of them shared in the trauma of the preceding days and prayed that out of the ashes, would come new life that would burn even brighter in their neighborhood, and they look forward to showing their resilience once again. The flame will be kept until a new building is built.

God sent out his disciples to “cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons, and do it without payment.” He was, in essence, telling them to carry the light wherever they went, and to carry nothing at all with them, because those who would receive their message would take care of them.

They would be given water and nourishment and a place to lay their weary heads. The disciples were tasked with a lot. We, too, are tasked with a lot. There are times when we think there is no way that things could get any worse, but then we hear about the good, we see the hands and feet of Jesus helping, supporting and caring for one another.

We have seen a *lot* of bad, but we can also see the good if we *just look* for it. Paul tells us, in his letter to the Romans, that we have “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character and character produces hope. Hope does NOT disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.”

We have hope because we walk with a God who will never leave our side; a God who has sent the Holy Spirit to lead and guide us along the way. God indeed, offers us grace, that we may offer it to others in his name, for the building up of the kingdom of God. God knows we can't go it alone, and so we share in one another's joys and sorrows.

We are called to act with justice, to love humbly and walk with God in Christ. We will get through this together, and we will be stronger, knowing that we walk together, cloaked in God's amazing love and grace. Amen