



[Pastor Keith GeRue](#)

Sermon for The Feast of St. Titus

January 26, 2025

Endurance

Acts 20:28-35; Titus 1:1-9; Luke 10:1-9

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Most of the people we hear about in the readings today . . . we don't know who they are. They're nameless men.

In the reading from Acts, Paul is speaking to the pastors of Ephesus. Instructing them, encouraging them. But who they are, we do not know. They're nameless preachers.

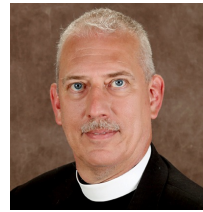
In the reading from Titus, of course we hear Titus' name, and Paul is writing to him, but we don't know much about this Titus. And who are these men that he then appoints as pastors in every town? We don't know. They're nameless preachers.

And then in the reading from Luke, Jesus sends 72 disciples ahead of him, to preach, to proclaim peace. Who are they, these nameless preachers? Even his original twelve - we know their names but very little else about them.

It's interesting, isn't it? And it teaches us something. That it's not about the preacher or teacher, it's about what is preached and taught. Or at least, it should be. It's not like sports with stars and superstars. The preacher or teacher isn't important. They shouldn't be the focus. The one they preach and teach is. Everything about Christ. Everything about His gifts.

When it's not, when the preacher or teacher becomes the focus, that's when things go wrong. When you hear about a preacher or teacher today, it is usually because something has gone wrong. Think about Peter. We mostly know not of his successes but his failures. And today, when a preacher or teacher makes the news, maybe it's because they were no longer above reproach. Or maybe they were no longer the husband of one wife; or they were arrogant, quick-tempered, a drunkard, violent, or greedy for gain; or they no longer held firm to the Word and preached it. And when that happens, the message is lost. Everything is about *them*. Everything about their fall.

That's why your pastors wear robes. To cover us up. Which pastor is up here, which assistant, doesn't matter. Or at least, it shouldn't. What matters is the Word. Everything about Christ. Everything about His gifts. Christ is the star.



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The pastor is just a mouth, and hands. A mouth and hands put here by God to preach. That's what the stole I wear means. It's not just decoration. I'm under orders to do this. It's supposed to represent a yoke - like a yoke that used to lie across the shoulders of a team of oxen, so the farmer could tell them where to go, where to plow. Pastors are not free, to plow where they want, to say what they want, to do what they want. They are put, called and ordained. To preach Christ. Everything about Christ. Everything about His gifts.

Isaiah said, *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news* (Isaiah 52:7). Feet. That's humbling. Not beautiful face or hair or clothes. Feet. Feet aren't beautiful. Only when they preach Christ. When they bring good news.

So Jesus sends seventy-two out, two by two. He tells them where to go, what to say, what to do. But it all boils down to this: **the kingdom of God has come near to you**. That's what it's about. Not which pair did the best, got the greatest results. Not who they were. But that **through the Word they spoke, the kingdom of God was there**. And the kingdom of God is here.

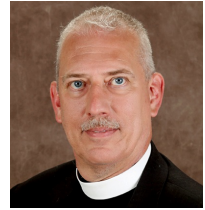
Not much of a kingdom, huh? *Or is it?*

In the reading from Acts, Paul told the Ephesian pastors he was giving his farewell sermon that **fierce wolves** would attack the flock. Jesus too, when sending out His seventy-two, sent them out as **lambs amid wolves**. And even for Titus, on the island of Crete, it says just after the verses we heard today that *Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons* (Titus 1:12). And that's what they were saying about themselves!

And that's the world we live in, isn't it? A world which crucifies the one sent to save it. A dog-eat-dog world that chews up and spits out whoever gets in our way. A world which devours reputations with twisted words and half-truths. And a world where these wolves are even in sheep's clothing - that is, are even in the church. And maybe even sometimes looks like you.

Yet out into such a wolffy world Jesus sends mouths *without* fangs, mouths to speak the truth, mouths to forgive, mouths to speak peace, mouths to give life - mouths to preach Him. Everything about Jesus. Everything about His gifts and His kingdom. **A kingdom where the lamb battles the wolf, and the lamb wins!**

Oh, it didn't look like it at first. The lamb was hanging dead on a cross and then His cold, lifeless body was laid in a tomb. That's what it looked like. And now the wolf was coming after them. So they locked the doors and barred the windows, that night when the kingdom of God seemed not near, but very, very far away.



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But just when things were at their darkest and bleakest, the disciples found out the the kingdom of God was indeed near them! In fact, He was in that very same room. The locked doors, the barred windows, the sealed tomb, no obstacle for Him. And the same peace He had sent them to proclaim earlier He now speaks to them. The satanic wolf didn't win. He did. He had to enter the belly of the beast to provide a way out for us. And as Jesus stood there, alive, victorious, risen from the dead, He spoke of the way out. That the way out of the belly of the beast wasn't with might or power or sword, but with His Word of peace and forgiveness. If you try to fight the wolf with your own might or power or sword, with your own person or words or looks, with your own ideas or thoughts or name, you're done for. Only one name matters to the wolf, *and it's not yours.*

And in this wolfly world, that need is great. ***The harvest is plentiful***, Jesus said, ***but the laborers are few***. Over the years the Lord has taken some laborers from here and put them in other places. Maybe there will be more. If so, how blessed we are to be able to give in this way. But still we'll ***pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest***. More laborers. For the need is great. That all hear the good news. That all know there is hope. That all know that ***the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared***, not to demand but to save. That all know that the kingdom of God has come near to them. With His forgiveness and life.

And that you know it, is why I'm here and the teachers are here. Just a mouth and hands and feet. To speak, to give. That here, everything be about Christ. Everything about His gifts, His forgiveness, His life. For you.

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.