

Reformation Sunday – Year A  
Matthew 10:16-23

November 2, 2008

Faith Lutheran, Radcliff, KY  
Pastor Paul Horn

### Christians, Sound the Alarm!

*16 I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. 17 "Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. 18 On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. 19 But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, 20 for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. 21 "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. 22 All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. 23 When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.*

Beep! Beep! Beep! The alarm was grating on his ears. How could it be 6:00am already?! A tired hand crept out from the warm safety of the covers and after missing a few times and knocking a few items off the nightstand, finally found the "Snooze" button on the top of the alarm. But five minutes later—Beep! Beep! Beep!—the alarm sounded its irritating call once more. This time the hand did not miss, but slapped down harder than the first time. Five minutes later, when the alarm dared to make its irksome noise once more, it was met not with an open palm, but a fist, slamming down hard against the poor machine that was only doing its job.

It has been said that Christians are a lot like alarm clocks. They take all sorts of abuse for doing their job: waking people up. The truth is that when you and I proclaim God's Word, we won't always be popular for it. Jesus never sugar-coats what it means to follow him. We will see that in the lesson this morning from Matthew's gospel.

The Teacher sends out his pupils into the villages and towns of Palestine to proclaim the message, "Repent! The Kingdom of heaven is near!" Jesus never deceives his disciples with false promises. He instructs them in advance of what will occur, so that when it comes to pass, they will not lose courage. He begins by saying, "**I am sending you out like sheep among wolves.**" (vs16) Sheep are helpless and defenseless against ferocious wolves. Jesus wants his disciples to know that when they proclaim the good news of salvation through Christ alone the people of the world would violently oppose their message. As a result he tells them, "**Be on your guard against people.**" The wolves will not be satisfied with the arrest of the sheep by the local religious organizations and the subsequent floggings. Their enemies will be all the more happy to hand them over to the civil authorities who had the power to imprison and even put the sheep to death. No doubt Jesus' words rang clear in their ears as the disciples carried Stephen's body after he was stoned to death. The enemies were very real for the disciples.

The enemies were real for the great reformer of the Christian Church. On October 31, 1517, the former Augustinian monk, now professor and doctor of theology at the University of Wittenberg sounded the alarm by pounding 95 theses, or statements for debate, onto the door of the castle church in Wittenberg. Martin Luther had discovered frightening truths about the Christian church. What the Roman Catholic Church had been teaching its people for the past several hundred years was in direct contradiction to the Scriptures. Not many realized it because the Bible was in Latin. No one knew Latin except the priests and the well-educated. Martin Luther began to study the Scriptures for himself. He discovered that God's Word said all are saved by grace alone. By grace alone?! That was offensive to many people. Surely man must have some part in his salvation?! Martin Luther found Scripture to say that all are saved by faith alone. This too was offensive! The Roman Catholic priests insisted that Christians must perform good works in order to gain salvation. Luther discovered that God's Word declares that all are saved by Scripture alone. Offensive! The priests would have said, "We must also adhere to the edicts of the pope in Rome, for there is no salvation apart from the papacy!" For sounding the alarm, Martin Luther was even summoned by the Emperor, by edict of the pope, to recant, "Take back what you are saying!" As a result, Luther was declared an outlaw. Anyone who found him could kill him without repercussion. His life was on the line, because he proclaimed the same message that the disciples preached. Luther's enemies were real.

Today we carry the same offensive message. We sound the alarm, "We are saved by Scripture alone." The world responds by objecting, "Stop being so closed minded! What about philosophy, human reason and these other world religions? What about our feelings? Don't they have input too?" We confess that a little sprinkling of water and the spoken Word of Christ creates faith, even in the heart of an infant. To many this is offensive. We boldly make the claim that Christ's body and blood are truly present with the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper to offer assurance that our sins are forgiven and that heaven is ours. "Offensive! That's not possible!" As Christians we sound the alarm, proclaiming the truth: we are saved by faith alone, by Scripture alone and by grace alone. We're very good at making a bold statement of faith within these walls. We're among friends who believe the same as we do. There is no fear of ridicule or rejection.

When we step out those doors, we're not so bold in our confession. Our lives are not in danger. We don't have to worry about being flogged like the disciples or hunted down like Martin Luther. But what our reputations, our popularity among friends and coworkers? We become anxious and apprehensive of how we might be perceived by others. We make excuses, "I'm not Martin Luther. I'm not the apostle Paul. There's no way I could ever make this kind of confession." Or, "What if I say the wrong thing?" Ah, we sound just like Moses, don't we? Remember when the LORD called him from the burning bush to go and proclaim a message of release for the prisoners...good news that the captives would be released from their slavery in Egypt? He stuttered and murmured and made every excuse in the book. The question we have then is, "How am I able to make a strong defense of my faith based solely on Scripture?" How did the disciples do it?

Jesus promised additional help. "**Do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.**" (vs19,20) I don't know about you, but if I were dragged before the highest ruling court of our country, the Supreme Court, and demanded to explain why I was preaching the good news of Jesus, out of nervousness I might stammer and stumble around for words. Read the book of Acts this week and count how many times the apostles were dragged into courtrooms and asked to explain what they were preaching. They each gave a beautiful confession of Jesus. The Teacher promised his disciples a Counselor. In the Greek language, this word for counselor is actually the word for a defense attorney who stands by your side and gives legal aid and advice. The Holy Spirit stood beside them and gave the disciples the words to say. This does not mean that the disciples were ventriloquist dolls flapping their lips. The Holy Counselor used each individual's skills and knowledge of Scripture and guided them to say what they did.

For Martin Luther the Holy Spirit gave the words (indirectly) to make bold stand at the Diet (religious meeting) at Worms, Germany. Luther's warning call had reached the ears of the pope in Rome. Pope Leo X wanted to squash this little monk from Saxony. He had more important things to worry about. The Turks were about to invade Europe. He needed a unified Germany to help defend. He couldn't deal with these religious "distractions." And so in April of 1521 the pope sent the emperor himself, Charles V, to take care of the matter. Picture the scene. A candle lit hall, the heir to a 1000 year old empire sitting on a raised platform, surrounded by representatives and advisors from Rome, Spanish troops decked out in their parade best, the hall packed with all the politically powerful of Germany. The archbishop of Trier gestures to three piles of books on a table and asks Luther, "Will you defend these books all together or do you wish to recant some of what you have said? Will you recant or not?"

Luther, standing alone in the middle of the room, replies, "Unless I can be instructed and convinced with evidence from the Holy Scriptures or with open, clear and distinct grounds and reasoning – and my conscience is captive to the Word of God – then I cannot and will not recant, because it is neither safe nor wise to act against conscience. Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me! Amen."

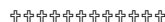
We too, are not alone, as we sound the warning to the world. Jesus' promise to his disciples is a promise to you and me. Our God is with us. He is with us today. Despite our failures to stand up for the gospel, for fear that we might be rejected, ostracized or even physically harmed, for our sins of making excuses, Jesus is here with us today. Through his body and blood in this Holy Supper he reminds us that he has forgiven us of those sins. He was that sheep, the Lamb, who was torn to pieces by the wolves, in order to cover us with his pure woolen garment of righteousness. Covered by Jesus' holiness at our baptisms, heaven is ours. Assured through this Heavenly Meal he grants us salvation. What more can man do to us? Even if the wolves take our lives, we win, for Christ won the victory over death for us. Since Christ has kept us spiritually safe from Satan and hell, let's get to work.

Christ has sent you to boldly sound the alarm. Wake others from their spiritual slumber before he returns. Study the Scriptures so that you can make a bold defense. As the apostle Peter said, "Always be prepared to give an answer for the hope that you have." When you go out to your homes, schools, work places and neighborhoods to share the truths of Scripture, trust him. He promised to send the Holy Spirit as your counselor, your defense attorney. Trust him. Even when you suffer rejection, persecution and possibly death, don't worry, he says. Trust in me as you sound the alarm.

I probably hate the alarm clock as much as anybody, especially at 6:00am. The constant beeping, reminding me to get my lazy self out of bed. Many people in your life will

hate you for sounding the alarm that we are not saved by our works, but by God's grace alone. Many will become frustrated with you for making an unwavering stand on the truths of Scripture alone. You might feel like a sheep, surrounded by wolves. But your help is greater. Trust in him. Because there will be some who will listen, and believe and thank you for sounding the alarm. Dear Christian, be bold and trust in Jesus as you share the gospel. Amen.

### **Announcements**



All the **unchurched** who do not know Jesus as their Savior that we may bring them the saving message of Jesus; **National Pastors Joseph Jamiton, Ellason Kambalame, Batson Liwonde and Kissinger Lusio** of the Lutheran Church of Central Africa and their families; **Pastor Steve Lange** as he celebrates 10 years in the ministry at Hope Lutheran in Louisville; **Hope Lutheran in Louisville** for their 35 year anniversary; **Michael & Erin Thompson, Aaron Barke, Larry Hurley, Nathan Blizzard, Jared Sundahl and Allen Foy** who are serving in the military overseas; **our members** who continue to invite their friends to our mission congregation to hear God's saving Word; **Sherry Jensen** who is at Pewee Valley; that the Lord will bless our outreach efforts and lead many unchurched people to seek Him at this congregation; **our building committee** as they make decisions regarding the new facility; **the Leadership Team** for our **Stewardship Campaign**; those who have not been with us for some time.

**Thank you to....** our guests who came to worship the Lord Jesus with us (join us again soon!); our organist and choir; Kay Reynolds for organizing the Fall Festival and everyone who assisted with the Festival; and all who served this week.

### **This Week at Faith...**

|             |  |               |                       |
|-------------|--|---------------|-----------------------|
| Monday      | Building Committee Meeting.....5pm                                 |               |                       |
| Tuesday     | Outreach calls.....6:30pm  |               |                       |
| Wednesday   | No Bible Study<br>No Youth Catechism<br>No Bible Information Class |               |                       |
| Next Sunday | Choir.....9am  | Worship ..... | Sunday School & Bible |
| Study.....  | 11:20 am   | .....10 am    |                       |

### **Last week's numbers in response to God's amazing grace**

Sunday worship: 50                      Sunday Bible Study: 14  
Children's Sunday School: 12  
Wednesday morning Bible class: 6  
Wednesday evening Bible Study: 2

### **Serving our Lord next week (Nov 9)**

Food: Wittmeier  
Flowers: Reynolds  
Cleaning: **no one is signed up**  
Usher/offering counters: Ed Tomita and Mark Ebersole

### **Faith Builds the Future Cottage Meetings**

The Hospitality and Visitation Team has posted a sign up sheet. Pick a date and location!  
Contact Anita with questions.

### **Meditations and Forward in Christ subscriptions**

Because the Lord is blessing us with greater numbers, the Church Council has determined to cut back on the number of Meditations devotion booklets and Forward in Christ magazines. You can order a personal subscription which will be delivered to your home by calling Northwestern Publishing House at 1-800-662-6022 or visit [www.nph.net](http://www.nph.net)

### **Faith Lutheran Community Bulletin Board**

A new bulletin board is available in the fellowship hall for anyone wanting to post notices about public events, items for sale, services offered, wanted, help needed etc.

### **Faith Builds the Future Bible Classes**

As part of our preparations to build our first building, we're about to start a series of 5 Bible studies, entitled "Glimpses of the Gift of Giving."

**Giving is a gift?** Yep. Paul told the Corinthians, "Just as you excel in everything-- in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us--see that you also excel in this grace of giving" -- 2 Corinthians 8:7).

**What will we study in these classes?** In short, the stories of the centurion in Luke 7, Barnabas in Acts 4, and the Corinthians in 2Corinthians 8 & 9. We'll see God's grace in action.

The Leadership Team is asking that **every member** of Faith Lutheran attend each of these Bible Classes.

### **Your options:**

- Attend all five sessions on Saturday, November 22nd from 10am to 4pm. (Bring a sack lunch. Drinks will be provided. We'll take 10-minute breaks every hour, and a lengthy lunch break.) Sign up on the board if you wish to participate this way.
- Attend five separate Sunday morning classes beginning November 9th from 11:20am-12:15pm
- Attend five separate Wednesday morning classes beginning October 29th from 10am-11am in the fellowship hall. (Oct 29, Nov 12, Nov 26, Dec 3, Dec 10)
- Attend five separate Wednesday evening classes beginning October 29th from 7-8pm in the fellowship hall. (Oct 29, Nov 12, Nov 19, Dec 3, Dec 10)

*If you know that none of these options, or a combination of 2-4, will work for you, would you do me the favor of phoning me or e-mailing me so we may possibly figure out a different schedule for you, and/or others like you?*

It's crucial to our building project that **all communicants** attend our upcoming Bible studies.

**Why?** "Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain."  
(Psalm 127:3).

***In His Service,***

***Pastor Paul Horn***

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*"The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory forever and ever. Amen!" 2Timothy 4:18*