

## Gospel lesson

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Seeing great need in the middle of His ministry,  
Jesus sends out His disciples.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/Lumo-jesus-disciples/>;  
courtesy of Lumo Project Films - [www.lumoproject.com](http://www.lumoproject.com)

### Matthew 9:35-10:8

NRSV

<sup>35</sup> 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.

<sup>36</sup> When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

<sup>37</sup> Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few;

<sup>38</sup> therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

<sup>10:1</sup> Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness.

<sup>2</sup> These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John;

<sup>3</sup> Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus;

<sup>4</sup> Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.

<sup>5</sup> These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans,

<sup>6</sup> but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

<sup>7</sup> As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.'

<sup>8</sup> Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment.

*The Word of God for the people of God*

<Children's/Interactive time>

Do you tend to laugh or cry when under stress you cannot control? <Let them respond; give example, such as parked vehicle (bicycle, car) getting crushed when heavy machinery fell off a transport truck>

Why do you react that way? <Let them respond>

Two days before my husband and I got married, we called to confirm reservations at the hotel where our wedding reception was to be. They told us they had just been flooded out and were referring reservations

to a nearby facility. When Keven asked them if that included the room for our wedding reception, the woman on the phone asked if she could get back to us on that.

How do you think we reacted? <Let them respond>

I started to laugh uncontrollably. It was too much to wrap my brain around two days before our wedding – having things work out was inconceivable. I did silently pray to God to help us figure something out, though – and God blessed us with availability of a nicer reception room at the nearby facility.

What do you think was the most important thing for Abraham and Sarah? <Let them respond>

Why do you think Sarah laughed at the Lord's promise? <Let them respond>

Sarah was old, had given up on being able to have a child, and did not have the strength/energy of youth to be a parent, yet having a child was still her heart's desire. Was she the only one who celebrated when her son was born? <Let them respond>

What does that tell you about our trust in God's promises when all seems hopeless? <Let them respond>

May we all trust in what God has told us, be blessed, and let our blessings bless others who need God's love too.

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<Hymn "Sent Out in Jesus' Name">

TFWS #2184>

## Message: A Miracle Called Laughter



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/forming-a-family-preparing-a-people/week-2-third-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a/week-2-third-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a-graphics>

Please pray with me?

God of transformative blessings,  
as we take time now to further consider today's  
scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we may trust faithfully in Your promises, and  
help others to experience Your grace as well. Amen.

As we consider "A Miracle Called Laughter" in our  
sermon series today, we think about:

"What Abraham, Sarah, and a few holy detours teach  
us about laughter, attention, and God's surprising  
grace."

<stop screen sharing in Zoom>

I took my granddaughter for ice cream this week. In  
the process of sitting down to eat it, I managed to  
knock my cupful upside down, catch it in my hand over  
my lap, and set it back on the table. Unfortunately,  
I also got some of it on my clothing.

I could have jumped up immediately to head home and try to avoid setting stains. Instead, I used napkins to take care of the worst of it and then paid attention to my granddaughter instead. God's gift of the loving relationship matters far more than any stuff I own.

The gift of people in our lives is a treasure from God, yet how often do we forget that and focus on material concerns instead of forging stronger bonds?

Abraham and Sarah focused on hospitality with the three who showed up at their home and were blessed with a reminder of God's promise. If you read the previous chapter in Genesis, you see that both Abraham and Sarah laughed upon their first hearing that they would have a son; he was named Isaac because Abraham had laughed in disbelief.

Despite their initial doubt, Abraham and Sarah remained faithful to God. God's fulfillment of His promise changed the laughter from disbelief to joy.

The disciples Jesus sent out to proclaim the Good News in the Gospel lesson today were apparently unsure that it would work out well; Jesus had to encourage and reassure them about it. They went where they were familiar with the customs to start the work; through this, Jesus built their capability and courage so that when the time came at Pentecost, they would be able to have trust in God for proclaiming the Good News to all.

How often do we hem and haw before talking about how

good God is? I try to get folks to share in the familiar space of our worship, where you know the customs, to start sharing how God is at work in your lives – how many of you have taken this outside the church, trusting in the Holy Spirit to help you, and told others about how good God is and how much Jesus loves them as well as each of us?

Trust in God and share the Good News with joy! Paul wrote about how we can even boast about God in our suffering, because God is with us, transforms us, strengthens us, pours the Holy Spirit into our hearts, and proved love for us through Christ.

Set aside your fears and move forward in faith and joy to serve the Lord! In the poem “Do It Anyway” accredited to Mother Teresa of Calcutta, the sinful world keeps putting up blocks to our living God’s grace, but we are called to live grace anyway. Today’s texts remind us of why we can be confident serving God by showing grace to others.

So what can or should we do?

- ✝ if you think wars are an abomination, call your legislators and tell them to make peace happen
- ✝ if you see oppression, speak up against it and offer assistance to those being oppressed
- ✝ if you encounter an immediate need, try to provide for it as best you can, and look for a change that will eliminate the need for the long term
- ✝ even just smiling, saying hello, and being patient with those you encounter can help this world have more good in it, more joy and laughter rather than

pain and struggle, more love than hate

Remember that we are called through the grace of God to build community together in the new life of Jesus, by the love poured out by the Holy Spirit. Invite the possibilities in, trust in the promise of new life in Jesus, and let God infuse you with a miracle called laughter. Amen.