



## THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

12 June 2005

Pastor Kevin R. Maly

Exodus 19:1-8a

Psalms 100

Romans 5:1-8

Matthew 7:21-29

Jesus saw the crowds, and it was gut-wrenching—for the people were severely wounded and helpless, like sheep without anyone to care for them. Then he said to his disciples, “There is much to be done, but the laborers are few. Pray God to send out laborers into the fields.”

Jesus looks out upon the world today, and it is gut-wrenching. Billions of people and everywhere the walking wounded, the starving, the ill, the homeless, the sick, the anxious, the depressed, the tortured, the terrorized, the victims of war. Jesus looks out upon the world, and it tears at his gut. Every people of the earth, harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd, left to the wolves, the mountain lions, and the coyotes, left to sleet, hail, wind, heat, snow. “So much to be done,” says Jesus, “but the laborers so few.” Oh yes, people everywhere *calling* themselves leaders, fooling others into calling them leaders – people in government, people in religion, people in business and industry, but still one child dying of starvation every three seconds. That’s 20 per minute; 1200 per hour; 28,800 per day; 201,600 per week; nearly ten-and-a-half million per year — more than died in the Holocaust, the Shoah—and that’s just the *children* who die of starvation. Gut-wrenching. Pray to God to send out laborers into the field.

Leaders of government living lives insulated from the daily grind of normal human-beings, never worrying about how much it costs to feed and clothe *their* families, never worrying about whether they will be able to afford health insurance or not. They are doing the important works of war and cannot be bothered with the wounded and the helpless. Let the poor lift themselves up by their bootstraps as we and our fathers and mothers did. Jesus looks upon the world, and his gut wrenches. Pray God to send out laborers into the field.

And leaders of religion, peddling fear of the neighbor and perpetuating prurient interest in the sex-lives of others so as not to look at their own lives. African churches critical of whom an American bishop loves while turning a nearly blind eye to the rampant physical and sexual abuse of women in their countries, turning a nearly blind eye to the genital mutilation perpetrated upon young females throughout their own continent. American churches fomenting hysteria over sex and the rapture, while remaining deafeningly silent about the consequences of petroleum-dependent economies gone mad with greed and consumerism, while generating virtual mountain ranges of discarded packaging and outdated electronic toys. And prelates in their costly, flowing garments and pointy little hats more interested in keeping women off the altar and out of the pulpit than in the number of babies born throughout the world into the hopeless agony of death by starvation and/or intractable illness.

And the captains of business and industry. Keeping us fearful of pickpockets and people with brown skin who speak Spanish so as to distract us from the real thieves among us—the ones in private jets who get paid the big bucks for falsifying accounts, bankrupting corporations, and leaving life-long employees with worthless stock and decimated pensions.

Jesus says to his followers, “There is much to be done; pray God to send out laborers into the field.”

And the well-off people of North America lying upon their couches, remote control in hand and breathlessly asking what Tom Cruise really thinks about Oprah, Brooke, and a ring for Katie; worrying themselves over Brad and Angelina, and who wore what to the MTV Movie Awards – all of this before going to the gym to work off all the excess food and drink ceaselessly shoved down their gullets at the promptings of advertisements that tell all to buy, spend, eat, drink and be merry, for African mothers are used to the death of *their* children.

Jesus looks out upon the world and his heart rends for all the people, for all people. They are sorely wounded and left helpless – like sheep without anyone to tend them. “Ask God,” he says, “to send out laborers into the fields.”

In Holy Baptism, God has summoned *each of us* —by name—has anointed each of us and has proclaimed that we are a priestly people, set apart – not to set ourselves above others or to judge ourselves better than others, but to care for all who are in any need, wherever the needy might be, whoever they might be, high or low – to bind up the broken hearted, to cure every sort of disease and dis-ease, to cast out the demons of violence, consumerism, war, greed, and starvation, to hold the hands of the frightened and the dying, to comfort those whose sadness is without end, to speak kindness to those who have nowhere to lay their heads, to teach the children, and to pray for all who ask and for the millions whose names we will never know.

Jesus has summoned each of you—by name—to go out into the world and to *be* the good news. God’s love has been poured into your hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to you. All this you have received without payment—give without expecting a single thing in return.

Come now to the table. Be fed with the very essence of Christ. Here you will be strengthened . . . for your priesthood . . . to the wounded and weary of this world.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN