

All around us we see green: green grass, green trees, and green fields. The gloomy colors of early spring are but a distant memory and we're finally in summer.

Perhaps it comes as no surprise that the décor of the church has also turned green. We're in a time of the church year where week after week is green. Depending on when Easter is, this time of the church can be longer or shorter. This year it will be 18 weeks straight of green on the altar, lectern, and pulpit. That's over a third of the year.

So what can we learn from this green in our church? First, 3. Green means "go." Everyone knows that a green traffic signal means go. And in this season of green, Jesus is telling us to go! No, not to go out the doors of the church, not to go on vacation. But Jesus is calling us to go on mission for Him.

In a word, this is what Jesus is telling us to do in our Gospel lesson today. "Go." **"The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."** The crops are green all around us, and Jesus is calling for field workers.

Jesus' desire for Christians to go comes from His compassion. **"When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."** Whenever we talk about going, we must first talk about Jesus as the first one who went. The Father said, "Go" and Jesus went down to Earth. He lived a perfect life and in this perfect life He ministered and cared for the lost sheep around Him. He is the good shepherd of the sheep.

The Father said "Go," and Jesus went all the way to the cross. He carried Your sins there to forgive you and to give you a new start. And Jesus continued to go, even as He rose from the dead and continued to witness to the disciples and to the other believers of His return.

We go because Jesus first went, and Jesus tells laborers to go because He has compassion on the lost sheep. He sends you people like your pastor because He loves you. He sends you people like a godly spouse or faithful parents because you were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Jesus sends people into our lives to share with us the Gospel so that we may not be lost in our selfish ways, but learn of a better way to live, and to learn of the way to eternal life.

And in this text, we see the first few people who went when Jesus said, "Go." **"The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him."** This is the only time Matthew calls the disciples apostles. The word apostle means "sent one." In this sense, the apostles are

“goers.” And in this text we see the twelve apostles go on a little mission trip among the lost sheep of Israel, not yet to the non-Jews, that won’t be until after Jesus’ resurrection and ascension.

And our stained-glass windows on the north and south sides of our church have logos representing these twelve apostles, except Matthias replaces Judas Iscariot. They knew that green meant go, and these twelve would eventually go all over the place to share the good news of Jesus who is the Lord of the harvest. They went out as field workers into the harvest to proclaim the Gospel of God’s Kingdom.

Faith Lutheran exists because the Church at large worked to send a pastor to La Crosse to work alongside faithful lay people to plant a congregation. Many of Faith’s pastors and members have been called to glory. Green means go. And in this season of harvest where the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few, will we as the next generation answer the call to go? Green means go.

Secondly, 2. Green means "grow." Green is the color of the plants which are growing all around us. Plants grow so slowly that you can’t see them grow before your eyes, but by the end of the growing season, the corn is taller than you are.

In the summer months, there are often less events going on at church, but that doesn’t mean we as the Church are to sit doing nothing. It doesn’t mean that since I’m on vacation, God must be on vacation. In this season of green often the Church grows in ways that can’t be seen with the naked eye.

The growing always happens as a result of the going. The Church always grows when we go out. For many people, this doesn’t mean quit your day job and become a pastor or missionary. It doesn’t only happen when you’re on a mission trip to a third world country. This growing happens when we share our faith with those whom God has placed in our own lives: family, relatives, acquaintances, and neighbors. The Lord often blesses our going with numerical growing, often, but not always.

Perhaps you’ll think of Isaiah, whose job it was to preach a message to people who weren’t listening. He certainly didn’t grow the church in numbers, in fact, he might have turned people away. And we see this too in our Gospel text. **“And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town.”** There’s no guarantee that everyone will receive this message with open arms.

Yet the Church *always* grows when we go out. If it isn’t the numbers, it’s our trust in Jesus. Look at the supply list Jesus gives the disciples. Don’t bring any money or extra provisions, the people will provide you your food. On a certain level, we see this is the case with pastors. Pastors go to new towns and to new people with the trust that they will provide him and his family food. It takes some level of trust to go not knowing where or how.

But even for laypeople, it may not be as drastic as Jesus outlines here, but it can take faith to invite that neighbor to church or to Bible study. It can be uncomfortable to offer to pray with your neighbor on the spot when he or she is having a difficult time. Even on a simple level, in this summer season when the sun is up later and we are too, it can also be hard to get out of bed to go to church to sit at the feet of Jesus and listen to His teaching. But all of these are opportunities to grow closer to your savior as you trust Him to work through you. Green means grow.

Finally, 1. Green means "glow." You could also say "show." The green season is a season to show your faith. It's a season to witness to others. As the old Gospel song goes, "This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine." We as Christians are called to glow that Gospel light even when it's more tempting than ever to hide it under a bushel.

We as Christians are being sent out as sheep among wolves. We support the first amendment right to assemble, and that includes the right to join together for worship. In this time of pandemic, our church leaders have represented us as they sent open letters to governors, mayors, and other leaders petitioning them, advocating for the right to gather lawfully for religious assembly in a safe and prudent manner.

At the moment, none of us have been flogged or physically beaten, but Christians have been dragged into courts for their beliefs. We have stood before governors and kings throughout the Church's history.

This green season is a chance for you to glow. Maybe you won't be set before kings and rulers, but you might be put on the spot at a birthday party. You might be called to account by your friends or relatives. And **"When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you."** You don't need to worry about what to say, the Holy Spirit will speak through you to give you the right words.

Go, grow, and glow. DURING THESE SUNDAYS AFTER PENTECOST, JESUS IS CALLING US TO JOIN HIM. In all these green season actions, we never go alone, we never grow alone, and we never glow alone. Jesus has gone before us going to the cross and to the empty tomb. Jesus has grown before us as He gathered His disciples and continues to be the Lord who is in control of the Harvest. Jesus has glowed before us even as He shone on the Transfiguration mount, and His deeds shone forth as light in a dark place. With this confidence and with His Holy Spirit filling us, we have the privilege and the honor of going wherever He may lead us in this green season. Amen!