

Mark 16:15
Good Shepherd, Beaver Dam
March, 2024
St. Patrick's Day

Before Jesus ascended to heaven, He said, Go, into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. These words are the disciples' marching orders. The world was living in the darkness of sin, which eventually leads to spiritual death. The disciples were to go, teach God's Word and bring the light of Jesus to a world living in spiritual darkness.

The man who, I believe, was the greatest missionary for our Lord was the Apostle Paul. Paul visited places like: Philippi, Corinth, Thessalonica, Athens, Ephesus, Jerusalem, Rome, Crete and Malta. Five times he was whipped by the Jews, three times he was beaten with rods, once he was stoned, three times he was shipwrecked, and once he spent a night and day in the sea. Paul was constantly on the move and often in danger.

Today we hear of another missionary who traveled to the far off land of Ireland; his name was Patrick.

The “luck” of the Irish

Patrick's mission was to take the gospel of Jesus to the land of Hibernia. (Ireland) We know a little bit about Patrick. He was born about 385 in Scotland. Christianity had made its way to the British Isles, but there was still much unbelief there.

When Patrick was 14, Irish pirates sailed to his homeland, captured him and others bringing them to Ireland as slaves. Patrick tended sheep for six years. In those six years, Patrick learned the language of his captors and their way of life.

When Patrick was 20, he escaped. He made his way to the coast of Ireland and found some sailors who took him back to Britain where he was reunited with his family. Later, Patrick studied theology in France and became a pastor and later a bishop.

We know that Patrick returned to Ireland to do mission work there. Why would he do that? If he liked the Irish people so much, why did he escape? If life was so good in Ireland, why did he return to Briton? Maybe it was the thought of those smiling Irish eyes!

Patrick's life was similar to Joseph in the Old Testament. Remember, Joseph was sold by his brothers into slavery in Egypt. Years later Joseph told his brothers, You planned evil against me, but God intended it for good. The evil in Patrick's life was used by God for the good of the Irish people! Lucky for the Irish!

So, why did Patrick return to Ireland? Because he was sent to Ireland as a missionary. Jesus also sent out His disciples, Go, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, teaching them to keep all the instructions I have given you.

Patrick went. He knew the language and the ways of the Irish. Patrick was doing God's will. That is what every Christian pastor seeks to do; the will of Jesus.

The Father sent Jesus into the world to be our Savior. Jesus willingly came. After the work of paying for sin was finished, Jesus sent His disciples out saying, As the Father has sent Me, so also am I sending you. On Pentecost, the Holy Spirit began to work earnestly with Christians through Word and Sacraments to bring the light of Christ to a dark and dying world.

Patrick was part of the Lord's “sending” and the Spirit's working to bring the gospel where God would bring life to the spiritually dead. So it wasn't “luck” that brought Patrick to Ireland, it was God's will!

Paul and Patrick were part of the Lord's “sending” ministry. The work was simple. Those “sent” missionaries taught about Jesus how He lived, died, and lives again as our Savior!

When Nancy and I were at Peridot, we knew three older missionaries who were sent to AZ by the Holy Spirit: Alfred

Uplegger (67) Henry Rosin (50) and Arthur Guenther (47). Those inashoods were called, they went, and they served Jesus. Pastor Reichert, Pastor Jaeger, and Pastor Meier were called, they came, and they are still serving Jesus.

Not all of us are pastors, but we are Christians and that makes us missionaries for we have been brought to faith through Baptism and strengthened in faith by God's Word and the Lord's Supper. We are here and this is where we are to serve Jesus!

God reminds us that our being here today in God's House isn't because of us, it is because of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Today, St. Patrick's Day has become a day about everything Irish instead of everything about Jesus.

St. Patrick's Day isn't about wearing green clothes. It is not remembering your Irish heritage. It is not about drinking green beer or eating bacon. It isn't even about Patrick. It is about how God spread the gospel through a man named Patrick who wasn't even Irish!

Today we live in a culture that doesn't believe that Jesus is important. But that shouldn't stop us from talking about Jesus! We want to remain faithful to Jesus in a world that doesn't know who Jesus is or what He has done for us. We want to preach His Word faithfully and use His Sacraments just as Jesus intended.

I suppose that Patrick had mixed emotions when he arrived in Ireland. Would the Irish arrest him as a runaway slave? Would they even listen to him? Yet, Patrick went. He taught. He did what God wanted him to do. Why? Patrick remembered what Jesus had promised: I am with you always Remember those words when you speak to someone, somewhere, at sometime about your Savior. Jesus is with you!

The early church took the world by storm. Those timid disciples hid behind locked doors because they were afraid they would be crucified like Jesus. But, they changed the history of the human race! How did that happen?

Well, their fear gave way to faith. They saw the risen Jesus and believed the Father had raised Him from the dead. Sent out by the Lord who had died and had risen for them, they shared the good news of forgiveness and eternal life through Jesus with anyone who would listen.

Scripture says that the Lord worked with them! We aren't "lucky" to be Christians; it was God's grace working in us because someone taught us about Jesus. That same Jesus works with us! Ask the Lord for ways we can be faithful missionaries!

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