

The Mission is Here
Matthew 10:40-42

Peace and grace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May the words of my mouth and the ears of our hearts be open to the word of God this day. AMEN.

Last Sunday was Trinity Sunday and the Gospel reading for that day came right from Matthew 28, where Jesus gives the great commission. He commands his disciples to go out to all nations baptizing in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that he has commanded them. Now this week we look back at Chapter 10 of Matthew's Gospel. The Twelve disciples are called together by Jesus and told to go out preaching and teaching, healing the sick and feeding the hungry, and offer the Lord's grace and love. Of course Jesus warns them that it will not be easy. They are to go without bags, without a change of clothes, without any preparation, to enter any house that is worthy and stay with the family there. But if they were unworthy they were to leave, shaking the dust from that town off of them as they left. Jesus even then in chapter 10 warns them it will not be just physically hard traveling like this but emotionally hard also, because family and friends will even turn against them. Spouses and parents, children, brothers and sisters will begin to reject you, neighbors will revile you. And Jesus tells them to not let fear overcome them. They are to stay strong in the faith and go as Jesus has commanded them loving and sharing the word of God.

So today when I read from the end of Chapter 10, we heard Jesus' ending of his speech to the disciples, go and whoever welcomes you welcomes me, whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. Now we all know that when Jesus said all this to his disciples he also was calling to all of us to fulfill that mission also. The Mission of all Christians and for the church is to share the Word of God the Good news of the victory and resurrection of Jesus Christ and to spread the love of God, feed the hungry, house the homeless, heal the sick physically and spiritually. And that is definitely not easy is it? How do we do all that as a church? How can you and you and you and me be up to this command of Jesus' to go and teach? How do we do it?

There is an old story, a legend, and epic poem that goes back before modern books, it goes back to before Shakespeare, to the legends of the 12th-14th century stories of Arthur and Camelot. Supposedly in Arthur's court there was a knight named Sir Launfal. Now there are many epic poems about knights and several about Sir Launfal. But one story retold is called the "Vision of Sir Launfal." In this story Sir Launfal accepted a holy mission, to seek out the Holy Grail and restore it to prominence in the hands of the church so that people may come and see the glory of God, that people that are in need may seek out its healing powers. That people in depression or

sick may be lifted up by the glory of that cup. This was a holy Quest and Sir Launfal, knew he must accomplish this mission for God.

So this young strong, ambitious, dedicated, somewhat haughty knight, begins to plan for this holy adventure that he was to accomplish. The night before he is to depart, Sir Launfal goes over his preparations one more time. He makes sure his mighty steed, is well taken care of, well feed, the saddle and bridle and all the tack, the ornaments are all shined up and new leather is oiled and everything is ready to go. He made sure his suit of armor that would protect from all enemies along this holy mission, was shined up glistening like the heavens themselves – not a dent or a scratch anywhere. He made sure his sword and daggers that he would use with great courage fighting against the forces of evil was all sharpened to a razor thin point. He made sure his shield was solid, no fractures, his symbols of his family crest proudly displayed so that all would know who is the one who will recover this holy Grail for all people to be amazed at.

And finally making sure that every last detail was taken care of, and everything was prepared, he knelt down beside his bed to pray before he slept his last night at home before venturing out on this mighty mission. And he prayed, “Dear Christ, tomorrow I begin my great journey in your name. I ask you for your blessing and guidance as I search for your holy grail, the cup you used the last night with your disciples, before your sacrifice and victory of Easter. Maek me pure, make me holy, give me wisdom, because only by your hand will I find this cup, to restore your people, and to help your people in sickness and needs.” And then he laid down to sleep.

Now according to the legend, as Sir Launfal slept that final night before he would depart on this important journey of faith, he received a vision. And in his vision Sir Launfal dreamt of his holy mission, his trip to find the Holy Grail.

And in this dream vision of his holy adventure, Sir Launfal believed it was all real, that he was actually saying goodbye to his friends and setting out on his mighty horse out past the castle gate. With his sword and shield, armor and war house Sir Launfal boldly rode through the gates out to find that grail.

But right before he even got fifty feet down from the castle gate, an old beggar hobbled directly into his path, begging for a handout. Sir Launfal looked down on this smelling dirty, rag covered man with as he raised his gnarled up hand up asking for money, and he thought to himself how inconvenient. He didn't have time for this he was just starting out on his mission, so he pushed the man aside and rode on into his mission to find the Holy Grail and return its glory to the people.

Now Sir Launfal in his vision, saw that time had passed. It was years later, You know how dreams can do that, that is exactly what happen to Sir Launfal, now his strength of being a youth

was gone, he was middle aged traveling through a desert. The heat beating down on him, the armor now dented and gritty, the horse looking tired time had worn him down. When in his vision suddenly over the next sand dune, Sir Launfal saw a man laying face down in the sand. With bright sun beating down on him, Sir Launfal could tell this man hadn't eaten in weeks. His lips were parched and he was dying of thirst. But Sir Launfal didn't have time to bring them man back to full health, after all he had his own life to think about and his own journey to search for God's Grail. The Holy Mission was at stake, so he gave the man a mouthful of water and a bit of bread and pressed on promising to send someone to help when he could.

And just as visions and dreams do, the time flew by again, and now Sir Launfal was elderly, his armor had fallen away his horse long ago had died, and now he was walking through a deep jungle using his once sharp sword to hack at branches and vines as he walked along. And in his dream Sir Launfal came upon yet another man lying in the jungle with fever, sweating and shaking, Sir Launfal didn't know what the man had or if it was contagious. He couldn't risk his life, afterall he still had his holy Mission to think about. So he went on by promising to send help when he could.

Again the dream shifted and now Sir Launfal was discouraged, walking in bended fashion, aged by time and hard journeys, he walked towards his home, the only home he had ever known. He approached the castle but the gaurds didn't know him and with disdain looking at his ragged appearance they told him no beggars were allowed here. Sir Launfal insisted that he was a nobleman and a knight sent years before on a holy mission to restore the Holy Grail and lift the people by its glory. The guards just laughed at him and told him to move on.

Dejected Sir Launfal, went down the rode just a bit and slumped down against the first house he came to –perhaps 50 feet down from the castle gate. He looked towards the light of the castle and heard the celebration of people eating and enjoying the feasts that were always held there – and he felt even more alone. Had Christ rejected him?

Finally as he pulled the last crust of stale bread out of his pocket, he noticed another man just a few feet away laying in the shadows of the house. So he moved over to this man and broke his bread in half and shared the last piece of bread that he had with this man. And when he handed it to the man the man turned and looked him in the eyes and in that moment of the vision, Sir Launfal knew that it was the same man he had met so many years before at the castle gate when he was young just starting out, it was the same man in the desert dying of thirst, it was the same man in the jungle sick with fever and as he ate that bread and shared his cup of water from his broken old bowl, the stale bread began to fresh baked and the water turned to the sweetest wine. Then he heard Christ saying to him, Not what we give, but what we share. For the gift

without the giver is bare, who gives himself with his alms feeds three, himself, his hungering neighbor and me. And suddenly the bowl that held the water became the very thing he had searched his life for, the Holy Grail.

And just as vision do, right when he saw the Holy Grail, Sir Launfal awoke from his dream, and saw that it was morning. The morning that he had planned to begin his journey in search of the Holy Grail. But instead, he ordered his armor be put away, his horse unsaddled and stalled, his sword hung up, and instead he opened his castle gates up and went out to the poor and hungry feeding them, giving them strength and healing. From that day on Sir Launfal, welcomed rich and poor alike into his home and was friendly to all. In his castle all experienced love, not just love, but abundant love, a compassion that no one had ever seen before. The Holy Mission that he had first thought was his to achieve was instead changed by this vision, not in far off lands, not in great discoveries, or heroic acts, but in common needs of people right there all around him. He was pouring the cup of God's blessing the best way he could in all ways to all people.

So the question is still there for us, how can we fulfill God's command to go to all peoples, teaching and healing and comforting and sharing the Word of God's love. We can do it right here, with each other and with all those we see each and every day, to love each other, to be considerate of each other, to care for each other, to share in God's compassion, praying for each other and being about God's call to share his cup of blessing, welcoming and showing God's love in your hearts and minds and words today and always. Amen.

May the peace and Grace of God be with you this day and throughout the week to come. AMEN.