

Second Sunday After Pentecost

Wicker Park Lutheran Church

Rev. Benjamin Adams

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So I'm not going to lie, I've never done this before, but I was tempted to just show up this morning and preach this sermon off the top of my head, no notes, no manuscript, completely lead by the Holy Spirit.

And could you really blame me? You'd have to take your complaint up with Jesus, because he's the one in our Gospel this morning who says, "do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you at that time; 20 for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you."

I mean come on, we have that verse, AND it's Father's day?! I was just gonna go for it and invite the Spirit of our Father God to speak through me today!

But then I could hear the voice of my biological father in my head, saying something to the effect of, "always be prepared," and I was immediately thrust back into the reality that the Spirit does not come with an on demand feature. In other words, yes, the Spirit does speak and work through us, but we could not presume to have the power to control where and when the spirit speaks. We are beholden to the movement of the spirit, the spirit's movement is not beholden to us.

So... I backpedalled on my original idea and I prepared the manuscript. And while I feel more confident that you will hear a gospel centered proclamation of the good news this morning because of the preparation I put in spending time listening for the voice of the Spirit of God speaking and putting it to paper, I have to confess that I feel a real

tension when I back pedal on the Spirit and stick to the script to keep me in my comfort zone.

But before we get too far down that road, I realize that you haven't really gotten to know who I am yet. So my name is Ben Adams, I serve half time as a Pastor of the South Loop Campus Ministry and half time as the assistant Pastor with Holy Trinity Lutheran Church.

I spend the majority of my time in and around Grace Place Episcopal Church in Printers Row where I have my office, and as I think about what it means to do ministry in Chicago's South Loop, I am both challenged and encouraged by Jesus' sending of the twelve disciples from our Gospel this morning. I am first challenged because in the campus ministry world this text hits close to home.

At least in the loop, the if you build it, they will come, attractional model of ministry flat out does not work. I sometimes dream about being in a place where students and parishioners just took it upon themselves and actively sought out our campus ministry or church. But if we relied on the open the doors and wait for folks to fill the chairs approach, we'd be hearing grasshoppers in worship.

And it's not only in the loop, maybe you all here in Wicker Park too are feeling the seismic shift in our culture, and the tried and true script for growing, or simply just maintaining a church needs a rewrite.

On NPR this week I heard a story of a fellow named Max Hawkins who invented this thing called bubble hopping. His inspiration for the app came after he reflected on the bubble that he was living in, that he felt trapped in. He says, "There's something about that that just made me feel trapped, like I was reading a story that I'd read before or I was playing out someone else's script."

So he built himself an app, an app which identified all the public Facebook events in San Francisco where he lived, and then randomly chose one for him to attend, and in giving himself over to the random, he experienced so

many beautiful, nerve racking, and surprising situations from a Community center pancake breakfast, to an open house, to salsa dancing events, to even acroyoga.

And as he did all this bubble-hopping, it started to become clear to him how much of modern American life is organized around preference. But if we only ever ask ourselves, what do I prefer and answer that question over and over, our answers will determine our lives, narrowing our path.

While I listened to this story I couldn't help but think of Jesus' words in our Gospel urging his disciples to break out of your bubble! Stop following the script you have written for yourself! Give yourself over to the community and experience where the Holy Spirit is moving.

But there are reasons we follow the script and stay in our bubble. Its safe in our bubble, it's predictable, it's comfortable. And Jesus knows that it's a dangerous and unpredictable world out there, he even says, "See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves."

And Jesus knowing this danger still does not discourage the wolves and the sheep from getting together because for Christ, the greater danger comes from the divide that exists and only grows if we don't burst our bubbles and get together with one another. That's the only way the peaceable kingdom of God is possible if the wolf and the sheep find a way to coexist in harmony.

In my life as a Campus Pastor we do a thing together called 'Takin' it to the streets. This is a ministry where we get together, fill our shopping cart full of peanut butter and jelly lunches, or soup in the cold winter months, and we go out into our neighborhood handing out meals to our neighbors.

This activity has brought us all over the city to underpasses, into alleyways, or to Lower Wacker Drive. And trust me, as the pastor of the group serving, and the one responsible for their safety, I have had my second thoughts before like I am sending sheep into the midst of wolves.

But I think how dangerous it would be if students attending Roosevelt, Columbia, DePaul, or Robert Morris go throughout their whole educational career downtown and never get the chance to meet the neighbors who surround them daily on their commute to class. What kind of division would I be supporting if I didn't encourage them to risk leaving their bubble or throwing away their script in order to discover that there is a wideness to God's community that we can only know and enjoy if we are willing to risk for it.

So where is Jesus sending you? From whom are you feeling separated or divided because you exist in such completely different bubbles? Who is missing in your script's cast of characters?

Out there beyond our predictable bubbles, or outside of our carefully crafted scripts the scenes will feel like improv, but there is a beauty when we can face that uncertainty and fear with faith that our God goes with us. And in fact, when we experience the true presence of Christ in the meal we will share this morning, we then become that broken body for the world.

As one commentator on today's gospel said, "To be sent *by* Jesus is, in some sense, to be sent *as* Jesus." And being aware of the dangers of savior-complexes that this way of approaching discipleship might create in us, let us go as the body of Christ broken for all creation. Throwing away our scripts, bursting forth from our bubbles, and getting caught up in the dangerous, unpredictable, and beautiful life of God's Son given to the world. Amen.