

## Justice Reflection on the Gospel 14 June

### **Matthew 9:35-10:23**

*Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."*

*Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.*

*These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment. Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for laborers deserve their food. Whatever town or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave. As you enter the house, greet it. If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town. Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.*

*"See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of them, for they will hand you over to councils and flog you in their synagogues; and you will be dragged before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them and the Gentiles. When they hand you over, 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; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next; for truly I tell you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes."*

This passage is frighteningly prescient for our time. We are living in the midst of a pandemic in which we live in fear, and for which many are seeking a cure. Yet as Presiding Bishop Michael Curry said during a sermon for Pentecost, we are also living in the midst of a “spiritual pandemic,” a “pandemic of selfishness.” We are living in a time when, yet again and in the most horrific way, we have witnessed close up manifestations of the evils of systemic racism. The descriptions of violence in this passage feel all too real today. We are in the midst of wolves. What do we do?

Jesus calls on us to speak out, knowing full well the dangers of doing so. In this time of both physical and spiritual pandemic, we are called on to examine the wrongs in the world around us, to gather our strength, and to face the wolves as best we can. We are called on to fight the systematic wrongs that pit members of our human family against each other.

That fight can take many forms. We can participate in peaceful demonstrations against racism. We can write letters. We can support organizations such as the African American Council of Churches in their efforts through this month’s Ingathering. We can reach out to our neighbors in so many ways. Father Andy and Mother Melesa have given us rich guidance in their message of 3 June. Let us pray together, guide each other, and act as each of us can for justice.