

Matthew 9:35-10:8

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness. These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called 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 Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.



"Working for Jesus"

When we cry, "Abba, Father!" it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God.
(from Romans 8:12-17)

As Jesus walks through Judea, he brings people back from the dead, heals others of long-standing diseases, frees some from demons and freely offers the wonderful news that God is at work in the world. He dismantles hell every step of the way, destroying it with the word and compassionate works of God.
(*'Meeting God in Service'*, Spiritual Formation Bible, p. 1292)

"Martin Luther," wrote Rev. Copenhaver, "mused that Joseph must have been a wonderful father for Jesus to have chosen to address God as Father. (Luther also said that his relationship with his own father was so difficult that he couldn't address God as Father without shuddering.) But the term Jesus actually used is even more remarkable---"Abba," which is an intimate term of endearment, more like "Pappa," or "Daddy." The word comes from the gurgling sounds that an infant makes before she has learned to talk. It is the first "word" an infant utters (and typical of a father to assume that the word refers to him: "She's talking to me!"). When Jesus addresses God as Abba it reflects the intimacy of his relationship with God, like an infant's close and trusting relationship with a nurturing parent. When Jesus calls God "Abba" it also makes clear that even before we have the right words—or any words at all—we have enough with which to approach God. Even our wordless gurgles or sighs too deep for words can be enough. That someone could have such a close relationship with God is remarkable. But the gospel goes on to affirm a still more remarkable truth: through Jesus, we are invited to have that kind of relationship with God as well. Not only is Jesus the Son of God but, through him, we are God's daughters and sons, and God is our Abba, too. Abba, I thank you that, although you are mighty and mysterious, you also seek an intimate relationship with me, like that of a child and a nurturing parent. Amen". (from "Our Papa in Heaven," 365 UCC Daily Devotions)

“Then he said to his disciples, the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the Harvest therefore, to send out workers into the harvest field.” (Matthew 9:37) The good news of the gospel is that not only are we beloved children of God, but also heirs of everything Jesus knew about his “Abba” in heaven. So when keeping the faith seems too hard for us to do, it’s good to remember that Jesus said to his disciples: “Don’t let your hearts be troubled: trust in God, and trust also in me.” (John 14:1)

Matt. 10:1: “He called his twelve and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.” In his reflection on this scripture, Rev. Green wrote in “Touched By God”: As a poet put it, “I learn by going where I have to go.” We learn who Jesus is by doing what he asks us to do: preach and heal through what we say and do, whether or not we mount a pulpit or cure illness. Three times in my life, someone has been so bold as to place their hands on my head or shoulders and pray explicitly for God’s blessing. This was more than praying at a polite distance. It involved touch—unsettling for some of us. I hadn’t asked for this. Sometimes we’re in no position to ask for what we need. Sometimes someone seems intuitively to know that only a power higher than our own, working through them, can touch us. We may not be cured but we can be healed. The power of what threatens us can be broken. Think of the embrace of a loved one, or, when appropriate, a good hug. Think of someone who listens well when something is troubling you. That’s a healing touch, too. All of us need more than a good prayer or a strong hug. But all of us first need power beyond our own that directly touches us with love and confidence. That’s what Jesus is all about---and how he becomes real for us and, through us, for others. God of healing and hope, touch us again and make us bold enough to share that with others. Amen. (God is Still Speaking, p. 391)

Matthew 9:35: “When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” The authority to continue Jesus’ work of driving out evil spirits and healing

disease and sickness, originates in the Heart of God and is energized within and among us by the Spirit of Compassion. She helps us take notice of the people around us. His Spirit increases our awareness of the need for compassion, and for God’s love and truth. (Spiritual Formation Bible, p. 1292)

Jesus sent the twelve out with the instruction to preach the good news that, in their acts of healing and driving out evil . . . “the kingdom of God is near” (Matt. 9:7). It’s Father’s Day. Today we give thanks for the many ways in which the nearness of God’s heart touches us in the compassionate acts of our earthly fathers (whether they are biological or adopted). I smile at one of the ways in which Charles Schulz cartooned a fathers’ compassionate act in his book, “You’re The Top, Pops!”



Prayer: Warm Father God, hugging every child, we thank you for compassionate fathers everywhere who labor as Jesus did, feeling the strains of human living. Amen.