Grace and Peace to you from our Lord and Saviour, Jesus who is the Christ. Amen

There was an old farmer, ragged and barefooted, who sat on the steps of his tumble-down farmhouse, chewing on a stem of grass. He was approached by a passing stranger who was searching for a cool drink of water. Wishing to start a conversation and get acquainted with this farmer, the stranger asked, " How is your wheat coming in this weather?"

"Ain’t got none", replied the farmer.

"Didn’t you plant any?" asked the frowning stranger.

"Nope," said the farmer, "fraid of fungus."

"Well," asked the newcomer, "how is your corn?"

"Didn’t plant none," replied the man, "fraid there warn ’t goin to be no rain."

"Really, what did you plant?’ asked the puzzled man.

"Nothing," said the farmer. "I jest played it safe!!!"

When a church member was asked by St. Peter as he approached the Pearly gates how many seeds of faith, how many seeds of the gospel did he plant while on earth, he replied, "none, I jest played it safe. I was afraid that some would think I was trying to show them I was better than they were. Others knew I wasn’t, I didn’t want to be called a hypocrite. Besides, St. Peter, I really didn’t know all that I should of about faith, Jesus, and salvation to be telling others about it. And come to think of it, isn’t that what we pay the Pastor, to do, go out and plant those seeds of faith, to go out and win souls for Christ. But tell me St. Peter, why, as I look beyond the gates here, I see so few people moving about.

St. Peter relied, "Oh, that is easy, there were so few laborers, so few seeds that were sown, that the harvest was never taken in."

As you can plainly tell this morning, our gospel lesson concerns a subject that we especially in the Lutheran church have not dealt with in a very effect way, the subject of witnessing, the subject of telling others about Jesus Christ. Many of us are like the farmer in our story, who just played it safe. He wasn’t willing to risk, he wasn’t willing to take a chance, so he had no crop, he had no harvest.

Many of us are in that same boat when it comes to witnessing for Jesus, when it comes to telling others about Christ, we aren’t willing to risk, we aren’t willing to plant a crop, so then there is no harvest. We are afraid what others might think, we are afraid of our own lack of faith or knowledge. We are afraid we might be called names or made fun of, and further we don’t see the task of witnessing as our responsibility, surely it has to be some one else’s job, not mine.

Notice in our gospel lesson, that Jesus sends out 70 people to heal, to preach by saying, "the kingdom of God has come near to you". Jesus sent out these 70 because he knew that everyone in the kingdom of God has the responsibility to witness to him. He knew he would be leaving this earth and the only way people would know and hear about his love for them, his sacrifice for them, his grace for them would be for his disciples to tell others so he sent them out to practice, to get a feeling for what they would he doing when He was gone.

And notice too that Jesus doesn’t say it is going to be easy witnessing for him. He tells the disciples that they are like lambs in the midst of the wolves. He tells them what to say when people accept them, and he also tells them what to say and do when people reject them for he knew not everyone was going to accept the good news of the kingdom. But the important point is he wanted the disciples, the 70 to try, to go out among the people and tell them about Jesus.

The great theologian, D. T. Niles, wrote, "Evangelism is one beggar telling another beggar where to find food."

We are all sinners and need the help of Jesus, but at the same time Jesus is counting on us to tell others about His saving grace in our lives. He wants us to tell others how we have been changed and affected by His grace in our lives. He wants us to share with others, to pass on the good news of the gospel to others.

He wants us to be like the ants in the following:

A party of missionaries was sitting at tea one afternoon, when suddenly an ant appeared on the white tablecloth made its way to one of the tea plates, walked around it, and finding nothing to eat there, made straight for the sugar basin. After eating some bits of sugar, it want off with a piece. The party watched it go off the table, down the table leg, along the floor of the room, and disappear underneath the door.

Not long afterwards, it returned with several of its relations, climbed up the leg of the table marched along, the top and led by the first ant, they all entered the sugar basin. After they had eaten their fill of sugar, they all departed, each with a piece of sugar in its mouth. But that was not all--presently a swarm of ants arrived to partake of the same sweet food. "

Jesus wants us to be like that first ant. After we have experienced the love of Christ in our lives, he wants us to spread the good news. He wants us to call on others so they may be able to experience the good news of the gospel in their lives.

A pastor had gathered a selected group of workers to train them to witness for Jesus. A young worker was complaining to a veteran caller about one of the people he had visited. "I’ tried to tell him about Jesus, I tried to tell him about the love Jesus had for Him. I tried to tell him that Jesus was interested in helping him to live a life of grace, to help him with the burdens he was caring.

But the man replied in this manner, " I am a poor old man and must stagger under this load of firewood that I had so much trouble in cutting. I can feel nothing of the love of God. I can feel nothing of God caring for my burdens. I can feel nothing of his grace for me. "

The visitor turned to the young; depressed visitor and said, " My son, if you would have offered to carry his load of ’wood for him. He would have believed in your words because he would have not only have heard about ’the love of God for him, but he would have seen an illustration of it in you.’’

Are you willing to carry some one else’s burden? Not only in the crisis time of their lives, but in the ordinary, every day experiences of cutting wood for the fire? Are you willing to get involved with someone on a day to day basis being concerned about their live, their faith, their relationship to Jesus?

Are you willing to be as Luther says, "to be the little Christ’s out in the world" willing to be with people as Christ was?

General ’Chinese’ Gordon once told of soldiers, "Send me no more of your lukewarms." And Jesus is saying the same thing in our gospel lesson. He does not want any lukewarm followers, but those who are willing to risk, to take a chance to spread his saving grace out in the world.

He wants us to reach out to those who are staggering with the burden of live and give them his grace. And that just might mean that we are to help them carry their burden, to walk besides them in their journey of live.

Are there lonely people who could use of visit? Are there the sick and dying who could use a prayer and a kind word? Are there those in grief trying to go on but are struggling and cannot get past their loss?

The answer is yes to all those questions, and you could be the answer in their lives, you can bring a yes, a voice to their struggles and a measure of God’s peace through Jesus to them.

But it takes someone who is willing to risk. Not like the farmer at the beginning of this sermon who was afraid to plant anything for fear it would not grow. No, we need to risk, to get besides someone and help them carry their burden, to give them a measure of God’s grace in their lives.

A man was all nice and clean and cooled off after a nice swim. Then he saw a man with his two sons trying to push a disabled car up a high hill on this hot and humid day. Two voices started yelling at each other inside of him, one said, "There is an opportunity for you to become involved with someone to care, you ought to help them push. The other voice said, "Now that is none of your business. You’ll get yourself all hot and dirty. Let them handle their own affair." He yielded to the first voice and put his shoulder to the back of the car. The father stuck out his dirty hand and say, "I am very glad that you came along. You had just enough strength added to ours to make the thing go."

Are you willing to risk, to get yourself dirty for others so that they might have a life that is full and rich, full of God’s grace and your care for them? Amen