

Sermon- "Sent to preach and Heal"
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Jesus is sending us out to preach and to heal, just as He sent out the disciples. We are part of a movement that begins with Jesus Christ, to bring healing, hope, and love to all the world. It is like throwing a pebble into a pond and watching the concentric circles that extend further and further out. We are part of that movement of Christ to extend Christ's love to all the world.

Mother Theresa received the Noble Peace prize for her work among the lowest class of people in India. The order of nuns who carry on her work care for people whom they find in gutters and garbage dumps in Calcutta. They bring them to the hospital and surround them with love. These beggars, whom others never touched or cared for in their lives, are now bathed, their sores are touched with healing salve, they sleep under soft sheets in a bed, and they are fed. A reporter once asked mother Theresa why she expends her energy for people who are going to die anyway. Why not attend to people worthy of rehabilitation? Mother Theresa responded, "These people have been treated all their lives like dogs. Their greatest disease is a sense that they are unwanted. Don't they have the right to die like angels?"

Jesus sends the disciples two by two, maybe to support one another in their ministry, and He gives them authority over demons and unclean spirits. He orders them to take nothing for their journey except a staff, sandals and one tunic; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts. I wonder if this is so that they will depend on God and the community of people to care for them. I wonder if it is also that they will more easily be able to relate to the people who have nothing. I wonder if leaving money, food, and extra clothing behind is a way for them not to focus their energy upon maintaining these things, but to focus upon the people whom they are sent to serve.

What does this mean for us? I have been sent by God to serve in Indianapolis, Louisville, Marysville, Michigan; St. Charles, Missouri; and now at good Shepherd. Each time we moved we had accumulated more stuff. We have three children and there were many things that accumulated around them. The older I get the more I am told by the church and the government to save, invest, save. As much as I claim and do believe that I depend upon God's grace and mercy to sustain us; carrying no bag, no food, and no money and no extra clothing does not seem true for me.

Are we dependent upon God and the community or not? Do I rely on God? Certainly, you have to provide for your needs and the needs of your family; to be good stewards of what you have been given. Wouldn't it be foolish to sell everything and take a vow of poverty? Would Jesus say these words to us if He were sending us out today?

I believe Jesus is speaking to us today. As long as we spend our energy and time in focusing on getting more and more money, possessions, clothing instead of serving and

loving the people to whom God is sending us, we don't rely on God's promise to care for us, and we are left to be buried under our possessions.

Dr Paul brand in the book, In the Likeness of God, tells of his parents who were missionaries in India. They were sent by God to proclaim the good News of Jesus Christ. They worked for 7 years before anyone accepted that Good News for themselves. The first conversion came as a result of bringing the healing love of Christ to a child. Villagers would sometimes abandon their sick family members on the doorstep of Dr. Brand's parent's home, and his missionary parents would take care of them. Once a Hindu priest sent his own sick child, his 9-month old daughter to be cared for by the Brand's; otherwise she would have been left to die. They took in this little child, nursed her to health and adopted her into their family. The villagers were so moved by this example of Christian love that a few people accepted Christ's giving love for themselves.

God has not left us alone. He has taken us in to His own family. We are touched by the healing love of God in Jesus Christ. He had no house, no possessions, no money. Even his tunic was taken by a soldier at the cross. He gave up His life so that we may know the healing love that God has for us. God loves us and world, and God keeps on sowing the seed of His love through you and me.

God also provides a community of faithful people who are here to support, encourage and care for us in our times of need. Stephen Ministers, people in small groups, and other caring people reach out to us and are the loving arms of Christ to walk with us through very difficult times in our lives.

We who have been loved so deeply by God are sent out to proclaim the healing love of God to others; to heal, to cast out demons. Who or what are the demons we are dealing with in our lives? Could they be the desire to accumulate more and more for ourselves? There are the demons of fear of those who threaten our lives or the lives of our loved ones. Addiction to alcohol and other drugs, cancer, heart disease, and other health problems can be demons. There may be demons of guilt that weighs heavily on us, or maintaining a grudge against someone who may have hurt us. Demons could be anything or anyone that keeps us from wholeness.

How do we live in a world where these demons persist and where life may end so randomly with violence and terror? Jesus started with sending out the disciples 2 by 2. He did not reach the whole world directly, but through these disciples and you and me, many lives are touched. We are sent to a world that needs to be loved.

We can be part of filling the world with Christ's presence. When we listen, pray for, stretch out our hands to touch a hurting person, we drive out demons and we bring healing through the love of Christ, and the ripples in life's pond keep going further and further out. Keep it going! Amen.