

The Sending God

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Bible Text: John 17:18-20
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For his own glory but he prays for his church. John 17.

1 These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: 2 As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. 3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. 4 I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. 5 And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. 6 I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. 7 Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. 8 For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. 9 I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. 10 And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. 11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. 12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. 13 And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. 14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. 18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. 19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. 20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; 21 That they all may

be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. 22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: 23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. 24 Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. 25 O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. 26 And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

Our text are the verses 18 through 20. I ask you to keep your Bibles open as we look carefully at the comparison that is made in these verses.

18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. 19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. 20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

May the Lord bless the reading and the preaching of his infallible inspired word.

Beloved in our Lord Jesus, this question: how important, how important is mission work whether it be in foreign fields far away or here domestically? How important is it to us as a denomination, how important is it to you as a congregation, how important is it to you as individual believers and families? Do you pray daily for it a your dinner table? Do you seek opportunities for personal evangelism? Do you have a heart, do you have a love for those who do not know Jesus? How important are missions? One of the marks of the true church is the pure preaching of God's word and out of the mark of the church, it is a promiscuous preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ wherever God opens up doors, wherever God opens up opportunities as congregations or as individuals to speak of the hope that is within us.

Missions, is it important? And the answer is yes because Jesus has commissioned his church at the end of every Gospel and the beginning of the book of Acts. The end of Matthew, Matthew 28:19, "Go ye therefore, into all the world, teach all nations." Acts 1:8, "But ye shall receive power after the Holy Ghost has come upon you and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." The church is commissioned by Jesus Christ, her head, and now in Jesus' high priestly prayer we have a connection drawn. Did you notice it? "As I even so also I send them." So under the theme "The Sending God," the sending God, God sent Jesus, Jesus sends hi church. The sending God, notice who are sent, where are they sent, and why are they sent? Who are sent, where are they sent, why are they sent?

According to our text, who are these sent ones? In our text there is a double comparison. Look at it. There is a comparison between the Father as the sender and Jesus Christ as the sender. There is a comparison, second of all, between Christ as the sent one and the church or the disciples as the sent ones. There is really one idea, one idea, as the Father sent Jesus into the world with a message, so Jesus Christ sends his disciples into the world with a message and Jesus prays, "As the Father hath sent me." Over and over and over again, the Scriptures emphasize that truth, that Jesus is the sent one so that in the Old Testament Psalm 40 we hear Jesus say, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart."

Isaiah 53, we have that beautiful chapter of the obedient servant of God who came into this world, and John's Gospel, I'm using the Gospel of John now in a Bible study in the Dore area of Michigan, as we go through it over and over there is this concept of the sending. John 1:6, "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light." John the Baptist was sent, commissioned. In John 3:17 Jesus says to Nicodemus, "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." In John 4 when the disciples come to Jesus when he is in Samaria by the well and they are finally bringing food to him, Jesus says, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work."

Boys and girls, listen closely to this next passage or next passages. Count how many times you hear that phrase "sent," "For I came down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of him that sent me, and this is the will of the Father that hath sent me, that of all that which he hath given me I should lose nothing but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that everyone which seeth the Son and believeth on him may have everlasting life and I will raise him up at the last day." In that same chapter, John 6:44, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day." Same chapter, John 6:57, "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, ever shall live with me." John 7, "My doctrine is not mine own but him that sent me." Again John 7, "He that speaketh himself seeketh his own glory but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true and no unrighteousness is in him." And I could continue, "Yet a little while I am with you and then I go unto him that sent me."

I quote those many verses not to fill in time but out of the 55 occurrences of that verb "sent," they refer 41 times to the fact that the Father has sent his Son. What does that mean? That means that Jesus is keenly aware of his being sent by the Father. It has the idea of identification. Who is Jesus? He is the Father sent one, but it also has the idea of authority. He didn't just come on his own but he comes as he is sent by special commission. There is a delegated authority in the person that is sent.

Jesus is the sent one and now in our text, "Even as the Father has sent me, even so I also send them," or you." Jesus sent his disciples out two by two. Once the 12 of them and later on 70 of his disciples, and now in our pericope of Jesus' high priestly prayer, he

prays for his disciples. They had been with Jesus for three years. He, Jesus, had manifested God's name unto them, Jesus had given them the words which the Father had given to him, verse 8. They had received those words. They believed that Jesus was the sent one, the promised one of the Father, the long awaited Messiah and they are now the sent ones and in John 20:21, on the day of resurrection we have almost the same words spoken, they are commissioned by Jesus again, and what is amazing then about these sent ones are these are the ones who had forsaken him on the cross, one of them had even denied Jesus Christ, but they are forgiven by Jesus and now commissioned by Jesus.

He says unto them, "Peace be unto you. As my Father has sent me, even so send I you." And in Jesus sending out his disciples whether it be the 11 in the Upper Room, whether it be the 12 or the 70, he is sending out his church and I want you to stand with me amazed at that, for who are we, the sent ones? We are sinners. We are ones who in our daily life often deny him or forsake him or are not faithful as we ought to be to him but we are forgiven and we are commissioned. The church has heard and received his word. Jesus says in verse 14 of our pericope, "I have given them thy word."

So the church collectively and each of us as saints, are sent into this world a commission, there's a mission statement. So again, let's look at these sent ones. Jesus was sent. We are sent as he was. There's a very close connection in our text. Verse 16, as Jesus was not of the world, we are not of the world. As Jesus was sanctified, verse 19, so also we are the sanctified ones. Verse 8, as Jesus received the word of his Father, so also we are those who have received that word, a precious heritage. As Jesus belonged to the Father, so we belong to Jesus Christ and therefore we belong to his Father.

That word "sent" used over and over means "commissioned; under authority," in other words, not going on our own, not doing our own thing, not choosing what we want to say but we have the identification as a church, the sent ones. We represent Jesus Christ even as Jesus Christ represented his Father.

We are the sanctified ones, that means those who have been separated from the world and wholly consecrated to Christ Jesus, given to the one who sends us, consecrated to the task given to us, empowered by the Holy Spirit. That comes through especially in John 20:22 where Jesus says to his disciples, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost."

So the sent ones, the church as Jesus Christ, the sent one, the sent ones resemble the one who sends them, the sender. Jesus said, "He who has seen me has seen the Father." May it also be true then that we are a picture of Christ Jesus. Let me ask this question: what picture of Jesus do others have through our speech, through our actions as we live in their communities? What pictures do they have of Christ in me? Do they see his glory or do they many times see our lack of concern or disdain or maybe pride as if somehow we're better than them? The enemies of Jesus after his resurrection, we read, took note of the disciples, they took note that these men had been with Jesus. Can the world that we go into tomorrow, can they take note that we have been with Jesus today by our speech, by our actions? The sent ones are to resemble the one who sends us. Chosen by the Father, we read in our passage, "Those whom thou hast given me." Sent by Jesus Christ,

empowered by the Holy Spirit, that missionary spirit was given to the church on Pentecost. The sent ones are to be obedient to the commission even as the sent one, Jesus Christ, was obedient to his Father in heaven.

So that's who the sent ones are, we move on second of all then, where? Where is this to be conducted? And first of all, the first thing told us about missions is that they are sent into the world. That word "mission" comes from the Latin, it means "to send; to dispatch." There's a sending forth.

So where are we sent? Into the world. That's why I picked this text over against John 20. "As the Father has sent me into the world, even so I also have sent them into the world." What does that mean? Well, that word "world" in the Scriptures can mean different things depending upon the context in which that word "world" is. It is the world which was created good but it is a world that is plunged into sin and now under God's curse.

So what does it mean to be in the world? Notice, first of all, everyone, to be in the world does not mean to be of the world. It does not mean to be like the world. We are not of the world, verse 16. There is an antithesis. We have been called out of the world and separated unto God. "They are not of the world," verse 16, "even as I am not of the world." But sent into the world. Not like the world.

You read funny things nowadays. So much of the church wants to be like the world and gives themselves over to the world. Where shall we worship? Let's go to the bars, that's where the people are and we'll sit in the bars and we'll have worship services. The world is welcoming those who are living in transgressions and fornication and they want to be like the world. The antithesis, we are not of the world. We don't follow the world, but we are sent into the world.

Well, what does that mean, into the world? Well, the world can sometimes mean this created world, the universe. "God so loved the cosmos, the world that he created, that he gave his only begotten Son," and Jesus says of that world, "It would not profit a man anything if he gained the whole of it and lost his soul in the process." But at times rather than being the whole universe that God created, at times it's limited to human beings, it means the inhabited world, and in our pericope, the word "world" means now that world in its ethical sense, a fallen world. It means mankind alienated from the life of God, sin-laden, exposed to judgment and in need of salvation. It's a world in rebellion against God. It's a world that now is in the grip of the evil one. As we read in John 4:3, "And every spirit that confesseth not Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God, even that is that spirit of antichrist whereof ye heard that it should come and even now already it is in the world."

That's the world we live in, in the grip of the evil one, a world of pride, covetousness, idolatry, pleasures, wickedness. It's a world that is set over against God, following its own wisdom and folly. It is a world in the grip of death. It is a world that hates Christ, hates his church, and will persecute and bring tribulation and suffering.

It's called the world because there is no distinction between race or nationality. Some people used to have a bumper sticker, "If you're not Dutch, you're not much," but whether you're Dutch or whether you're African or whether you're Chinese, none of us are much for we are all sinners lost in sin and we fall short of the glory of God.

It is into that world that God sent his Son. 1 John 4:9, "In this manifested the love of God toward us because that God sent his begotten Son into the world that we might live through him." Or again 1 John 4:14, "And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world." And the holy, righteous, perfect Son of God sent into this world of sin and death, how the holy angels must have questioned and marveled, "How can this be? What is God doing? How can the Father send his Son here in this sick world so that he who is Light is sent down into death and darkness?" "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." And as the Father sent his Son into that world, even so Christ sends his disciples, he sends the church, he sends you and me into the world.

Why? Why? Doesn't Jesus in verse 24 say, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." Why didn't Jesus take his disciples, take his church right up into heaven with him in his ascension? Why you're in the world of sin, darkness and bitterness and hatred? And the answer is because they have a task. They have to witness. They also must be a light in the midst of darkness. They must be the salt of the earth, and those who are Christ's disciples may not shirk from that calling. Those who are his disciples, his church, may not separate out and try to be their own little communities. They are sent into the world, that means we live in those neighborhoods, that means we work in their workplaces, it means that we shop in their stores and we eat in their restaurants.

It is certain, it is certain that Christ's disciples cannot and they may not attempt to retreat from that world. John 17:15, "I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil." It is into the world, that means all of the world, Mark 16:15, that Christ sends them. Light in the midst of darkness, for that world is that field that Jesus Christ says is a field ripe unto harvest, so that we are to labor, to witness of the truth that is in our Lord Jesus Christ, for this world fallen as it is, is still God's world even though at present it is underneath the power of the evil one.

So that brings a question: well, how was Christ and how are his disciples sent into the world while not being of the world? Well, we read in verse 19, "And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." Christ was set apart by the Father, commissioned by the Father, the church is set apart by Christ, commissioned by Christ Jesus. What that meant for Christ was self-sacrifice. It meant for Christ sent into this world that he offered up himself, he dedicated himself to that sacred task for which the Father had committed him, namely the task of rendering complete obedience, and it is by that obedience, yea, the obedience unto the death of the cross that he obtains for us complete salvation, and Jesus completes his work so that the disciples not only are saved but they are given the Holy Spirit so that they are set apart and

consecrated to Jesus and to the task that Jesus gives us. Jesus offered himself willingly in order that the disciples could be truly set apart and qualified for the exalted task of proclaiming the Gospel to the world that is lost in sin.

So as Jesus was dedicated, offered himself, gave himself, sacrificed, so the disciples of Jesus, his church, are set apart to be dedicated, self-offering, consecrated persons, consecrated by, consecrated in the truth of the Gospel. We are to be in our mission as Jesus Christ was in his mission. We are to be like the one sending us, set apart, consecrated and dedicated.

Who are sent? Where are they sent? Into this dark lost world. Why sent? Sent for a purpose. Sent with a message. Jesus says of himself, "I came not for the righteous but to seek and to save that which is lost." That was the message of Jesus Christ, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no man comes to the Father but by me."

So look at Jesus. He's sitting in the house of Matthew, the tax collector, and we read, "Behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples," and then the Pharisees asked Jesus' disciples, "Why eateth thy master with publicans and sinners?" How did Jesus answer them? Jesus answers for he knows their thoughts, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. I will have mercy not sacrifice for I am not come down to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." Jesus was sent into the world to call sinners to repentance. He ate, he spoke with them, he brought the word of God to them.

1 Timothy 1:15, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief." What a message of the Apostle Paul, "I am the chief of the sinners." And when you and I recognize what sinners we are, that Jesus Christ came into the world for us, rather than looking down our nose at those outside the church in their sins, we'll have a compassion. Jesus came into the world to save sinners. 1 John 4:9, "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." Verse 10, sent him "to be the propitiation for our sins." 1 John 4:14, "the Father sent his Son to be the Savior of the world."

Jesus was sent with a message, with a purpose, to seek and to save the lost and now Jesus sends his disciples, his church into the world with that task, with that message, with the Holy Spirit poured out. We read in John 15:27, "And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning." His disciples must testify so that those given to the Son by the Father before the foundations of the world might be brought in, and in all that God receives all the glory.

Look again at our text, verse 20, "Neither pray I for these alone," that is, the ones that he's sending out, "but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." What a beautiful thing that is. What a beautiful thing it was in the Philippines when the word went forth. God by his grace working in the hearts, they received that word, they were eager to study that word. They confessed Jesus Christ. Jesus is building his church there.

How beautiful when the church today is obedient. She brings the Gospel promiscuously wherever God opens up an opportunity, an open door for us, and through the message, through the preaching of the Gospel, God brings in those whom he has chosen before the foundation of the world and has given to Jesus Christ and they are brought in.

You say, "But can I do that? Am I able to make that witness personally? Are we able as a church to go into this society that we live in that's so materialistic?" Jesus doesn't send us alone but rather the missionary spirit, that is, the spirit of the ascended Lord Jesus has been given to the church and therefore we are a missionary people, set apart by Christ, consecrated to Jesus Christ in the task that he has given us to seek, to save the lost, to herald, to bear witness of Jesus Christ, and our message, our message is still the same, there is only one name by which men and women can be saved. Jesus' followers, his true disciples, are people on a mission sent and that means that we are not to have too high an opinion of ourselves. It means serving Jesus Christ as the one who was sent, we also take the way of the cross which of necessity is a lowly path. But Jesus does not send us out on that task like Pharaoh sent out the Israelites. They had to make bricks but they had to go find them straw first to make those bricks. Jesus sends us out but he prepares us. He has given us his word. He has given us the message.

He has given us his Spirit and he now says, "Go into the world." What does that mean specifically? As Jesus was sent into the world, so we are sent into the world. There is in our text the Incarnation principle, becoming one with those that we would help. Jesus did not stay in heaven. Jesus did not shout from heaven, "Repent and believe." Jesus did not shout from heaven, "I am the way and the truth and the life." Jesus did not shout from heaven, "I'm seeking and saving those who are lost." But he came down. He divested himself of his glory and he appeared in humble form and that's what it meant to come into the world, and that's the way we also are to come, not just staying safely in the comfortable confines of the church, not retreating from the world where it's safe or non-threatening, not saying, "Well, we preach the message of the Gospel here in church. Let them come if they want to come." No, Jesus said, "Go. Go ye out into the world to the uttermost parts of the earth." As the Father sent Jesus into the world, Jesus sends his disciples, his church into the world, all the world.

Not of the world, but in the world. We have to be careful. That's an important principle. The antithesis, not of the world. We don't conduct ourselves like the world. We don't think like the world. We're not friends with the world but we are friendly, that is, we take the opportunity with our co-workers or our neighbor across the street or the person that we ride on the train or in the car with, we help them, we listen to them, we create opportunities or we cause God to give us opportunities so that getting to know us, we get to know them, they ask us, "What is the reason of the hope that's within you?" We don't run away from them. We don't try to be far away, in the world as lights, friendly.

Jesus said, "Go." Eating as he did, socializing as he did with publicans and sinners, not friends of the world but friendly toward others, approachable, helpful. The Lord has blessed us as churches. The Lord has so blessed us as churches that many of us are outgrowing our buildings, we have to have daughter churches, we're building more

schools, but look at that growth, how much of that growth is not from within? That's wonderful, we're thankful for sons and daughters and grandchildren who know and love the truth like we do. God is faithful in our generations, but how much of that growth is from without? Jesus said, "Go. Go."

My daughter was working with a gal, not much church background, at times maybe the language not the best, but it was a consistent witness, being helpful, working together at the care facility that the girl trusted the girl could ask my daughter questions, "What is it that you have? Why do you conduct yourself that way?" Or another daughter in a worldly dormitory, "What do you have?" Oh, may those whom you work with, may those who live across the street, interacting with them ask us and may God give us then by his Spirit the words to speak, "Not I but Christ Jesus lives in me. He's all the world to me."

Our mission, "Go," Jesus says, "Go into the world," as Jesus entered the world for we are the sent ones. We are to go as those people that are saved by faith in Jesus Christ and we go that others may believe through the word that we bring, individually, collectively as a church, and in doing so the glory [unintelligible] to us, but the glory goes to God who gathers and builds and saves those whom he has chosen from the foundation of the world. May God bless his church for he has sent them. Amen.

Father in heaven, what a glorious Gospel we have, what a glorious tradition thou hast given us in the Reformed faith, what a treasure we have but, Father, we will not keep that treasure for ourselves or just for our children but we desire that others also may know Jesus, may know the precious truths that we know and love. Bless us, O Lord, in our commission. Amen.