

<b>Series:</b> Purposeful	<b>Reference:</b> John 20:21	<b>Title:</b> John: Sent & Centered	<b>Date:</b> 03.03.18
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Website Writeup:</b></p> <p><i>We are a SENT people in the purpose of God to bring glory to Christ. The Gospel calls us to both proclamation &amp; demonstration. How have we usurped the Missio Dei (the Mission of God) to become the Missio ME (My mission)?</i></p>			

### Color changes in text indicate slide changes

Imagine being a follower of Jesus for 3 years, filled with all sorts of expectations & dreams for the future. On the day of his crucifixion what would you remember?

- His mother would recall Simeon's prophecy at the Temple about her son.
- Simon & Andrew, maybe the first day Jesus called you to become fishers of men.
- The Apostles would remember Jesus healing people of various diseases including leprosy, raising Lazarus from the dead, feeding thousands with only a few fish & loaves, not once, but twice!
- Him embracing tax collectors, prostitutes & many other sinners - overturning your preconceived notions of people, purity, love & care.
- Crowds following & pressing in on him, starved for his words.
- The guy lowered through the roof on a mat whom Jesus healed.
- His quick wit with the Pharisees, guys you'd been wanting to see put in their place for a long time.
- His incredible use of words & timeless teaching in the parables.
- When he calmed a storm, and walked on water!
- He raised a girl from the dead & cured a woman's 12 years of bleeding.
- His teaching on the Mount & the profoundness of its Truth.
- If you were Peter, James or John, you'd remember the amazing Transfiguration on the mountain!
- His Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem riding on a donkey, a visual testimony of his peaceful Lordship over all peoples.
- How he predicted his own death & his amazing claims to deity.
- Him withering a fig tree with a word & overturning tables in the Temple courtyard due to his passion for what that place was meant to be.
- As one of the 12 you'd remember The Last Supper, reclining with each other in the Upper Room as Jesus shared the wine & bread, speaking of his own coming sacrifice & what it would mean to the world, beginning with you & the others present.
- Or his anguish & sweating blood in the Garden of Gethsemane & subsequent arrest, and how he went so peacefully healing the ear of the guard before going.
- You'd recall his flogging & carrying the cross.
- You'd remember clearly his death on the cross, the rending of the curtain in the Temple when he died & how the earth went dark for a time.
- If you were Peter, you'd remember the 3 times you denied him.

The crucifixion would've dashed every hope you had in this 'Messiah' with whom you'd spent 3 years of your life, and on whom you'd placed all your hopes. Imagine how deflated you'd feel. How lost you'd feel when he breathed his last...

Jesus' life demonstrates to us, God works in mysterious & miraculous ways - His ways & thoughts are definitely higher than ours (Isa. 55:9). The life & death of Jesus are not how we would've written the story. Not at all.

*In John 20:21 "...Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you."*

These words come after the resurrection, where Jesus has been raised to life & had revealed himself to various individuals, including Mary & many of the disciples, restoring hope & reassuring them of God's presence.

The presence of Jesus makes all the difference. Jesus was there for the disciples in the storm on the Sea of Galilee, when they thought they were going to drown (Mark 4:35-41). Jesus' presence throughout the Gospels meant nothing would ever be the same again. In Matthew 7:28-29 we understand what that difference was: *"<sup>28</sup>When Jesus had finished this sermon, the crowds were astonished at His teaching, <sup>29</sup>because He was teaching them like one who had authority, and not like their scribes."* There was a power & authority in his teaching. Jesus was different in all ways. His presence is powerful & at the cross they must've felt His presence had left them...

But when Jesus appeared among the disciples again, his words reflect his being - a being which brings PEACE & revealing Himself to be SENT by the Father. Notice, John 20:21 says the same as Matthew 28:18-20, also a post-resurrection command - as a matter of fact, it's His last command, our first concern. There too we see him as SENT with authority, which his whole life on earth had confirmed. And in it he also sends us out for the same purposes to exhibit God's glory, and to share his life with all peoples - and that is his purpose.

**The Resurrected Christ. Jesus alive. With us now.** So the question is, what difference does the presence of Christ make in your life & ministry?

And while you think on that question consider these things... **Firstly**, isn't this Gospel just foolishness? A dead guy rising from the grave? How can we really believe this stuff?

Vince Vitali & Ravi Zacharias were at an event in Pittsburgh answering the question, *'Why is Christianity right?'* Vince said, when he was coming to faith, what was important for him was to have a publicly reliable historic claim which he could verify.

Have you ever played whisper down the lane? Where you have a circle of people who whisper a statement in the ear of the person next to them. They in turn repeat that to the person next to them, and so on. By the end it's funny to hear how the statement has changed.

It used to be thought that people simply whispered down the lane & came up with this crazy story of the resurrection of Christ. A hundred years ago that's what many scholars would've stated, but since then that claim has been utterly demolished. **If you look at 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 there's a list of people Jesus appeared to after his resurrection. It says...**

***<sup>3</sup>For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup>that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup>and that he appeared to Cephas (Peter), and then to the Twelve. <sup>6</sup>After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers & sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. <sup>7</sup>Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, <sup>8</sup>and last of all he appeared to me also...***

Today, even the most atheistic scholars date that passage as written almost immediately after the resurrection event. Which explains why it's written as it is, saying that most of the people mentioned who witnessed this event were still living at the time of writing. As if to say, "Go & ask these people yourselves!" As a result, the legendary 'whisper-down-the-lane theory' has been all but thrown out by scholars across the board, even the most skeptical. Since, there were many people at that time who were convinced they'd seen & interacted with Jesus even after he had died an excruciating death on the cross!

That fact explains why what should've been the movement-ending result of Jesus death, actually resulted in the opposite - an explosion of Christianity across the board. Jews now worshiping a man as God, something unthinkable before this - they must've been overwhelmingly convinced by seeing him alive once more. The Sabbath changing from Saturday to Sunday, unthinkable. There's simply too much data, too many reliable eyewitness accounts, too many credible testimonies, which testify to Jesus' resurrection from the dead! The only explanation which is taken seriously at all anymore is an actual resurrection of Jesus, all other theories have been undermined to the point they're just not considered to be worthy of discussion.

The resurrection of Jesus is of central importance to the message we proclaim. Jesus' resurrection validates all of His claims.

So, in your witness, do you focus more on a rational approach to convince people of the superiority of Christian faith, or is your reliance on God's Spirit for His work in the hearts of people? The power & authority, the Presence of Jesus - the Spirit's conviction in this amazing story.

**Secondly**, Jesus meets us where we are, yet directs us toward a better future. Jesus displays incredible grace & patience with His disciples throughout his ministry, and even more so after His resurrection.

In John 21 he restores Peter by asking him the same question 3 times, “*Do you love me, Peter?*” Three times, the same number of times Peter denied him before the crucifixion. So many times people ask me questions like, how can I be a Christian if I still do X or Y? There’s a difference in the person who doesn’t care, as to the person feeling conviction by the Holy Spirit & battling with a habitual sin - we all stand in good company with people like Peter. We all stumble through this faith grasping hold of the nature of Grace which has covered our sinful nature - past, present & future!

Ephesians 2 confirms this - God made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in our transgressions... it’s by grace you’ve been saved, through faith, and this not of yourselves - it is the gift of God, not by works so that no one can boast. Christ’s perfect record legally covers you, clearing your unholy record before a Holy God. Our only job now is to pursue Christ as best we can, knowing that even our failure in doing so cannot separate us from the love of Christ (Romans 8:37-39)!

Jesus comforts, encourages, affirms & restores us to full faith even when we feel we’ve lost all hope. The measuring rod’s been thrown out - our connection to Christ is based on relationship alone - Father to Child, with full of assurance of God’s love & passion for his children. We have full rights as sons & daughters with full rights to inheritance of eternal life & all the benefits of the Kingdom. We’ve been grafted into Christ, adopted as the children of God, made family. And loving fathers don’t deny their children, no matter how badly the child screws up. We’re restored, made new, the old is gone the new has come - no matter how we feel day in & day out - feelings aren’t facts! We stand on the Promises of God, not just our feelings & experience. Amen!

**Thirdly**, the Mission we are sent to participate in, involves the fullness of God. It’s God’s mission which is demonstrated practically for us in the life & ministry of Jesus. We’re to emulate him as we’ve watched his earthly ministry unfold. That ‘as we go’ we are demonstrating & communicating the Gospel to anyone we come in contact with. Praying for them. Telling them. Modeling Christ to them. We’re called to embody this mission in the same spirit, with the same heart & commitment as Jesus himself. Again knowing that we reside under the grace of God covering all our failures & successes in doing so. Jesus promises his presence with us to the very end of the age. All his timeless teaching, His Spirit, his guidance, wisdom, discernment, his mercy, love & grace reside with us always - which enable us to live out his purpose to seek his glory among all peoples of the earth!

**Fourthly**, Jesus’ presence with us means our presence in the world should make a meaningful difference to the lives of people around us. Effort in spiritual formation is paramount, giving the Holy Spirit every opportunity to build into us for the sake of his purpose - if you miss things like the retreat, you’re missing opportunity to grow in discipleship & influence of others along the way. It’s important to seek holiness & purity due to our purpose of glorifying Jesus & fulfilling his purposes of seeing all peoples know him. We’re Ambassadors of Christ. Representatives. Keepers of the keys of the Kingdom. The Body of Christ on earth.

*The question is, are we the fragrance of God, or do we repel people? This is illustrated in 2 Corinthians 2:14-15...<sup>14</sup> But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession & uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere. <sup>15</sup> For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved & those who are perishing.*

An image of captives being led through the streets of a conquering king with incense being burned in front of them. We're captives of Christ, led through the worlds streets, identified with him, spreading the fragrance of Christs sacrifice for all peoples.

Do we live lives antithetical to the Gospel? Antithetical to the heart of Christ reflecting commitment & love to others? Antithetical to unity of the Body & the sacrificial servanthood of Jesus? Are we Bible-Thumpers operating out of pride? Or are we a people of humility, fully given over to Him, non-judgmental, since we're no better than anyone else, but also calling others higher into the reaches of holiness & purity reflective of God's character? How we live & speak before others is key due to who we represent & our purpose of bringing him glory & making disciples of others.

For applications sake...**firstly**, we need to recognize the Gospel involves BOTH *proclamation & demonstration*. The incarnation of Jesus suggests, God's word is validated through his coming, his death & resurrection, his miracles & his presence in our ministry. Our ministry must be reflective of this full embodiment. We are people of peace, sent out by Jesus to incarnate the life of Christ into the neighborhoods in which we reside, and our collective reach into other parts of the world.

A people fully given over to Christ in all ways. Like Moses making life decisions to follow God in purpose. Like Nehemiah, not being derailed by the temptations & distractions of life from purpose. Like Peter, following Christ in obedience no matter the cost, unconcerned with what culture or individuals think of our obedience to Jesus. And now like John, we come to this realization of being filled with peace to be sent out bearing Christ to others for the sake of God's glory & God's mission.

Willing to do God's work God's way, both in proclamation & demonstration. Ambassadors of Christ, the only Bible someone might read.

**Secondly**, God's church is privileged to participate in God's mission by invitation & through delegation. In what ways has the church changed this mission in ways that differ from God's original intent? Do we rely only on the Clergy or Missionaries, or do we recognize we're all called to reveal Jesus' glory & to fulfill his purpose in this world? That we're all a Gospel sacrifice given over to constant death for the sake of others to know him - our lives & words matter.

*Ephesians 5 explains this well... Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children <sup>2</sup> and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us & gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering & sacrifice to God. <sup>3</sup> But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are*

*improper for God's holy people. <sup>4</sup> Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. (vv3-4)...*

*<sup>8</sup> For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light <sup>9</sup> (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness & truth) <sup>10</sup> and find out what pleases the Lord. <sup>11</sup> Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. (vv8-11)... <sup>15</sup> Be very careful, then, how you live - not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup> making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. (v15)*

**Thirdly**, John 20:21 indicates, we're centered in God's Living Word in Christ & sent to the world with Christ. How might we address our Gospel deficiency & rebalance our cultural expectations? Do we swallow anything which comes down the cultural pipeline? Or do we measure everything against God's Word? Matching anything & everything to the Created Order which we see revealed in the Scriptures (Love Thy Body). Do we fill ourselves with the Word of God daily preparing ourselves to give an answer to the hope we have in Christ? Do we address those things in us which are offensive to Jesus life, sacrificing them at the alter in order to be of use to our King?

I'd leave you today with a few challenges... **Firstly**, what does this 'peace' of Jesus look like in the context of being sent to the nations? Collectively we support various missionaries & works going on in the world cross-culturally. Do you pray for these things & are you willing to support them? And here in our daily lives, in what ways have you experienced God's peace & presence at work in your life? Do you recognize the opportunities before you, and take the risk of stepping into them in faith?

**Secondly**, how have you compromised the Gospel by your tendency to usurp the *Missio Dei* (the mission of God), turning it into *Missio ME* (my mission/purpose - the American Dream)? Are you more concerned about making your million dollars, or being comfortable, or doing what you want to do in life rather than asking God what he would have you do? Are you willing to be uncomfortable & live in risk for the Gospel to be advanced & bring glory to Christ?

**Thirdly**, what does 'SENT-ness' practically look like? Who are you sent to? To where are you sent? This week in our Community Groups we endeavored to write out testimonies at the length of 3 minutes to prepare ourselves to share our own conversion story. Then we wrote down 3 people we'd like to be praying for & to witness to in some way. Maybe you can do the same.

Because, Jesus said, *"Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you."* We're a SENT people in the PURPOSE of God to bring GLORY to Christ among the nations, and the Gospel calls us to both *proclamation & demonstration*. It's our story to tell, and it matters how we live.