

Because Jesus we are sent
Jubilee Mennonite Church
June 25, 2017
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Message: As Disciples, we are invited to step into the world in the name of Christ.

Purpose: To recall the sending mission of Christ which is ours.

Scripture: Matthew 9:35-10:8 (I will read); Romans 5:1-8 (Please read)

Synopsis: One of the most difficult thing we promise in our dedication and baptismal vows is the concept of following on where Jesus sends us. We often apply a grandiose romantic Victorian notion to this of being a missionary sent to the darkest jungle of where ever to do the work of God. Which is a fine way to excuse ourselves from the invitation of being a disciple as “it was simply not our call”. Yet, the calling need not be the literal ends of the earth. We a just as much sent to olur world immediately to hand and nearer to what is ours. How might we hear God’s sending invitation to be part of what is already happening in our world as part of our sending as his disciples?

Note: Due to time considerations, the hope is to have this be a short (10-15 minute) sermon.

Matthew 9:35 - 10:23

35 Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages,
teaching in their synagogues,
and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom,
and curing every disease and every sickness.

36 When he saw the crowds,
he had compassion for them,
because they were harassed and helpless,
like sheep without a shepherd.

37 Then he said to his disciples,
“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few;
38 therefore ask the Lord of the harvest
to send out laborers into his harvest.”

10 Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples
and gave them authority over unclean spirits,
to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness.

2 These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter,
and his brother Andrew;
James son of Zebedee, and his brother John;
3 Philip and Bartholomew;
Thomas and Matthew the tax collector;
James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus;
4 Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.

5 These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions:
“Go nowhere among the Gentiles,
and enter no town of the Samaritans,
6 but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

7 As you go, proclaim the good news,
‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’
8 Cure the sick, raise the dead,
cleanse the lepers, cast out demons.
You received without payment; give without payment.

By in large we don't do all that much with Saints. It is part of the church that we simply left behind like large scale, building sized art and a high view of the priesthood. It is not a very Mennonite thing to consider. We prefer to have our church lives arranged in a much less hierarchical fashion, with everyone pretty much on the same level be they pastor, priest or parishioner. We're not much for giving people more credit than what they are due, and may God forbid it that anyone might get it in their heads that we might be worth venerating, and treating with special awe and care. It would just be too embarrassing, prideful and awkward to know what to do with. That's the theory in any case.

Yet, we do have our special list of those who perhaps are a slight cut above. It is those who are sent, the missionaries and foreign workers who have a calling and blessing of the church to go out and do the REAL work of the kingdom. As a kid, I remember the thrill that I got in getting to meet and have dinner with Peter and Elfrieda Dyck. The Dycks, as many of you would know, are storied workers for Mennonite Central Committee who in the midst of World War II were sent to lead Mennonite refugees out of Russia and Germany to the new world. Perhaps some of those people who they saved were even relatives and forbearers of those sitting here today. They had books written about their exploits, full of adventures that I grew up reading. It was a high honor to meet these Saints of the Mennonite world for my young self, because anyone who had been given a purpose and mission that special must be extraordinary in their own right.

Its how we are given to think of this whole sense of being sent as disciples of Christ: this big deal-go overseas for years on end sort of thing. It is they who are taking on the work of building the kingdom—the big they who make up the saints of the un-sainted Mennonite world. We think of the sending of the disciples out into the community to do the work of the kingdom as the sending of the special people to go and to carry on the work of Jesus. We look at those being sent and we admire them, and wave them off, giving thanks to God in our hearts that it isn't us going out and doing whatever it is that they are doing.

Except that is not how this is really supposed to work. We come to days like today when we are celebrating the events of the life of the church; giving thanks for new life in our midst in

child dedication and the celebration of people formally joining the body of Christ. We hear all the good words and the high minded ideals and we are reminded. It is right there in what we say when we commission our children—do you promise to give them to the task that they are called to do; right there when we sign up for becoming a member of the church—are you willing to step out into a world you may not know what to do with. Right there in the foundational language of the church is a basic assumption that would confound the notion of the “specially sent”. Everyone has their mission. Everyone is called to build the kingdom, perhaps not in the remarkable fashion of some, and often not by “curing every disease and casting out demons” though I wonder what might happen if we took that part of the story a bit more seriously. Despite the roll call of the specific disciples here that Matthew records as they are sent into their first fore’ into the world on behalf of the kingdom around them, Jesus leaves little doubt that he is sending the disciples, all of them, into the world to serve the world and build the kingdom. As Jesus departs this world in Matthew’s narrative, he leaves them charging them to go out and to make disciples under all circumstances and in all places, even to the ends of the earth (precisely where we get that scary language within the commissioning of baby dedications). All of this makes it fairly clear that to be disciple following after the way of Christ means by definition doing the work of Christ, even, as it is said, unto the ends of the earth.

Perhaps it is just this that gets us in trouble. This ends of the earth language. We have so romanticized, fetishized, and just made it so extra special that we struggle to hear these sending words are not only meant for those with a particular calling to live them out, but rather even for the disciples whose very calling is to remain firmly rooted and grounded in the soils where God has planted them from the very first. We know that the harvest is just as wanting, even not more so, near at hand then it is far away. God is putting us in the places where we are sent to all the time; we just fail to recognize them for what they are. To us, they are our neighbourhoods, schools, work places, coffee shops, transit busses and city streets: the ordinary stuff and schedule of our lives. But to God these are very places where healing and wholeness begin. And it begins with regular ordinary folks whose sole qualification to be about the work of the master is simply saying yes when being invited to come along and follow him. Jesus sends us into the world to love the world in the way he loved the world—fully and without end—with all the messy results that come after. This is no job for saints, out of time and out of place, too good to be true and too

powerful to be believed (though, I do think we sometimes have too quickly walked away from the examples of the faithfulness that these brothers and sisters provide us). This is the work of ordinary people doing ordinary things sent by the extraordinary power of the living Christ.

We are sent, each one, to be Christ in the world. These last weeks we have heard some practical examples of how that might work for us and how we might go about the ongoing work of being Jesus to this particular end of the earth. We have been inspired with new ideas. We have been praying together about what this might mean. We are being invited, always, to respond right where we are and right as we are to the call of God on each of our lives. Strange things happen when we say yes to Christ, say yes to God. We were invited from the very first when we came into the church, and we are invited still today. My question for you is simple—what is keeping you from saying yes again, and stepping out in the name of Christ still today?

May we each here God's inviting voice calling us forth in faith for the glory of the kingdom. Amen.