

“You Are Sent” // John 20:19–23 // Live Sent Week 2022

John 20, if you have your Bibles today... We’re going to take a **one-week hiatus** from our **Life of David** series because I want us to zero in on a very important dimension in the life of our church, one especially important this coming week.

We end every worship service here with the **same 3 words**. You know what they are? “Get outta here.” “Time for lunch?” “Nic Cage forever.” No, none of those. The 3 words are: “Remember to tithe.” *No, for real, they are--say it with me: “You are sent.”* We say it each week, but have you ever thought about *why* we say it?

That’s not just a way of saying “service is over, everybody; go home.” We say it because of the last conversation Jesus had with his disciples (or one of his last conversations) before he ascended back to heaven. **John 20:19, if you have your Bibles, let me walk you through it:**

John 20:19 On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them (he just physically appeared in their midst) and said to them, “Peace be with you... [20] And he showed them his hands and his side. And the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. And then he said (underline this), **“As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”** Jesus follows that with a couple of statements which are kind of confusing, but really important and we’ll unpack in a minute. First, [22] ~~And when he had said this,~~ he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. And then, even more confusing:[23] If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.” John 20:21–23

We’ll come back to those, but that statement--“As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” (John 20:21) is an EXTREMELY significant statement coming at the end of John’s Gospel, because Jesus’ **primary identity throughout the Gospel of John has been “the Sent one,”** and repeatedly throughout the Gospel Jesus’ main designation for God has been “the Father who sent me!” (Next time you read through the Gospel of John circle the word “sent” any time it appears--you’ll find it’s in there more than 60 times!¹) And now, in these final conversations with his disciples, Jesus passes on his primary identity--“the Sent one”--to us! To all of us. Everything else we do as followers of Jesus flows out of that baseline identity.

There’s a famous story about Albert Einstein. In his old age, he began to have some senior moments... OK, cute story, but for the believer, who you are and where you are going are intertwined: **if you forget who you are, you can’t really know where you’re going!** As a follower of Jesus, you are SENT **like he was**. And that means regardless of whatever else you do in life--whatever your profession or personality is; or what your spiritual gifts are or where you live--**you are sent**. Those are Jesus’ words *TO YOU*.

In Luke’s account of the Great Commission in Acts, Jesus says, **“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”** (Acts 1:8)

¹ “Being Sent, from the Gospel of John,” <http://www.releaseotheape.com/sent-john/#.Yvg5hOzMKFF>. [i] Andreas J. Kostenberger and Peter T. O’Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 203. Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John, vol. 2* (New York: Doubleday, 1970), 1036. John R.W. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1975), 23.

- **Think about this:** Of all the things that Jesus *could* have said here--he could have said: “You will be my worshippers;” or, “you will be my prayer warriors;” “my Bible-studiers,” my “justice-advocates”--all those would have been true, but he chose to say, “You will be my WITNESSES.”
- “Witness”--*sent one*; that’s your primary identity, and that means in everything else we do, *that’s who we are; that’s our identity.*

Now, maybe that’s intimidating to you. You’re like, “*Witness? Sent one? I don’t know how to do that! I don’t even know where to start.*” But here’s Jesus’ promise: “Follow me, and **I WILL MAKE YOU a fisher of men.**” (Matthew 4:19) He didn’t say, “Follow me and MAKE YOURSELF into a fisher of men.” He said, “If you follow me, this is what I will do in you.”

Or, consider the promise Jesus made them in the Gospel of John right before sending them. John 15:16 “...I have chosen you and appointed you that you should go and bring forth fruit.” (John 15:16) If you are a follower of Jesus, I have very good news for you this morning: **God has appointed you to be fruitful.** He chose you **FOER THAT PURPOSE.** You may feel this morning like you don’t have much potential; like you are spiritually incompetent; like you’ll never make that much of an impact; but Jesus has declared a better, a more definitive word over you: “I have appointed you to go and bring forth fruit. That’s why I chose you.” And the same power that opened the eyes of the blind and walked on water and multiplied the loaves the fishes will perfect that promise in you.

And so, **this weekend, I want to unpack for you** what it means to live a SENT life. We’re going to give Jesus a chance to fulfill that promise in us. (**Most of the insights** are going to come right of this passage in John, but I also want to introduce you to a book that has helped me out a lot recently—It’s called *Sent: Living a Life that Invites Others to Jesus*, by Dr. Heather Holleman.² (Dr. Holleman is an English professor at Penn State), and this is a book she co-wrote with her husband--it’s got a lot of good, fresh insights on how to live like this that have been helpful for me.)) Here we go:

1. SENT people recognize both God’s role and their role in the Great Commission

SENT people understand that God has a role and you have a role, and both are indispensable. Dr. Holleman says that 3 convictions undergird the sent life:

- God is always at work around us, drawing people to himself.** Here’s the good news: Bringing others to Jesus is not on you; only God can do that. And, more good news, Jesus says, John 5:17, that the Father is always at work around you doing just that. The Father is the one that draws; he’s the one that creates interest; he’s the one that convinces. I can’t tell you what a huge relief that is to me. I’m not responsible for producing spiritual life in others. I don’t bear the weight of creating interest in them or even convincing them. That’s all God’s work.
- God uses people to lead others to Jesus.** It’s true that God is the one doing the work in them, but at the same time, you and I have an indispensable role. Faith comes only by hearing the Word of God, the Bible says, and we’re the ones who sow the Word into people. God produces the fruit, but I sow the word into people’s hearts that God uses to bring the fruit. Which leads...
- God continually invites us into his saving work.** Just like Jesus said he was sent to join in what the Father was doing around him, we are sent to do the same. God is always at work around us, drawing people to himself, and he invites us into his saving work.

² Heather and Ashley Holleman, *Sent: Living a Life that Invites Others to Jesus*. Available via Amazon.com

Which leads us to that startling thing Jesus said in vs. 23 of our passage: **If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.** (John 20:23) This can be a difficult verse because it almost makes it sound like Jesus is giving US the authority to forgive sins. But that can't be true. Remember how I said you always interpret hard verses in the Bible by easy ones? Well, multiple verses in the Bible say that only God can forgive sins.

Think about it this way: If anybody in history would ever have had the authority to forgive sins, it would have been Peter. He was standing in that original group that heard these words and he was recognized as one of the main leaders of the church. And **some today do indeed claim that Peter and his successors** have the authority to forgive sins. But **not one time in the Bible** do you ever find Peter taking upon himself the authority to grant forgiveness. **Not once.** In fact, in Acts 10, when Peter preaches the gospel to a group of Gentiles, he says to them--notice this-- **Acts 10:43, "To him (Jesus) all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."** Peter didn't say, "I forgive your sins," he said, "The Bible says if you believe in Jesus you will receive forgiveness of sins and I'm just here to tell you about it."

So, if this phrase doesn't mean that we have the authority to forgive sins, what does it mean? Well--this is a little nerdy, so hang with me for a minute: (23) the expression *"if you forgive someone's sins, THEY ARE FORGIVEN"* is in the perfect-tense verbs in Greek, which means you could translate that phrase as: "they HAVE BEEN forgiven." You could really read that statement as, **"If you forgive any one's sins they have (already) been forgiven."**³ In other words, Jesus was saying that Peter and the Apostles were given the ability to recognize when God had saved someone, and the authority to validate their acceptance of it, assuring those new Gentile believers, when they believed, that they were indeed fully included in the family of God. The Apostles could recognize when someone's sins were forgiven, and make it official.

Even more importantly, it was through the Apostles preaching that others heard the message and believed. God will forgive the sins of anyone who believes, but, it's like Paul said, *"How can they believe on him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear unless we preach to them?"* We hold in our hands the power to share the only message by which people can be forgiven.

Jesus died to forgive the sins of everybody, but that death doesn't do any good unless they hear about it. It's like **Martin Luther** said, "it wouldn't matter if Jesus died 1000x if nobody ever heard about it!" Or the theologian **Carl F. H. Henry: *The gospel means 'good news,' but it is only good news for somebody if it gets to them in time.***³ Jesus purchase of their forgiveness doesn't do them good if they never hear about it, and we are the only ones they can hear about it from.))

So, SENT people recognize God's role and their role in the Great Commission.

2. SENT people have a rich "theology of place"

This is a good one--this is one I borrow from the book SENT. In Acts 17 the Apostle Paul says, **"God...determined the allotted periods and the boundaries of (the nations') dwelling places, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him... (Acts 17:26-27).** **Paul says that God has sovereignly arranged the location and borders of nations** so that different nations can hear the gospel. Paul is talking here about whole nations, but surely what he said would apply to our personal own "borders" too--

³ ESV Study Bible note, John 20:23.

God has appointed our own borders and the allotted places of our dwelling so that others can hear about God and seek him.

- **SENT people understand that they are in their profession**, or their neighborhood, or on this particular hall, or sitting next to THIS particular person in THIS class, *for a reason*.
- And because of that, SENT people always have their radar on for where God is at work around them.
- **The authors of this book work a lot with CRU**, which is pretty active on our local college campuses here, too, and they have started this national initiative called, **“What do you see?”** It’s a question designed to make you open your eyes to where God might be at work around you. **What people do you see? What needs do you see?** If the Father is always at work around you, where is it happening? **Who do you see?** Open your eyes!
- This reminds me of many years ago when we, as a church, first embraced the fact that God had put us in the Triangle for a purpose--this wasn’t just a good place with a lot of people where we could grow a church. That’s kinda how I had thought of the Triangle up to that point. He had put us here because we are responsible for the Triangle--its brokenness is our brokenness; its needs are our needs.
 - This realization first happened (for me, at least), as I was preaching through Acts back in the early 2000’s (messages you cannot find on our website because I’m too embarrassed of them.)... Acts 8/Acts 9
 - I scheduled a **meeting with the mayor** and asked him what the city’s biggest needs were: HOPUD. It’s morphed over the years but those same essential pegs have been in place. And God has called us so many times to join him in these areas and we have experienced so many outpourings of his power in them.
 - Like, back in 2008 Eastway Elementary was doing so poorly it was just months away from being closed, and we, Summit--we got involved renovating, and serving teachers, and tutoring kids. For several years we loaded up the teachers with supplies at the beginning of the year and assigned prayer partners to classrooms and even did a joint Christmas program with the school. The school experienced this huge turnaround and the principal said in the **Durham Herald-Sun**, “A lot of people are to credit for this, but I feel like I have to start by thanking God and the people of the Summit Church who poured out his kindness to us and made all this possible.”
 - Since then we’ve had principals of new schools opening in the Triangle who called us to see if we wanted to use their auditorium on Sunday. We ask, “Why?” and they say, “Because we’ve heard from other principals what a blessing you are to the communities you go to.”
 - We have **foster care workers** from Durham and Wake County who have said how often people getting involved in the foster care and adoption system are connected to Summit and mention the vision of their church as a key reason for getting involved
 - THIS IS WHO WE ARE; OUR IDENTITY; WE ARE SENT
- **Listen to me! God has determined YOUR “place”—where you live**; your neighborhood; your career. Even random encounters. THAT’S A THEOLOGY OF *PLACE*. SENT people are always asking “What do I see?” One of the verses I love: 2 Cor 2:14, “God has put us in certain places to be the aroma of Christ there.” **You’re there just to smell up the place--in a good way--for Jesus. And when you live this way, there’s no telling what will happen—cuz God will just open the nose of somebody.**
 - About a year and a half ago, there was a young woman standing in my kitchen; I had never met her--at least, I thought I hadn’t. She was one of my daughter’s new small group leaders and they were at our house for an event. So, I introduced myself to her and she smiled and said, *“We’ve actually met before. You obviously don’t remember this--but a couple of years ago we were both at RDU airport waiting for a 6 am flight to ATL. (I don’t know why, y’all, but a lot of things happen for me in the airport!)*

She said you sat down near me, and as we waited to board the plane you noticed I was reading a book by Richard Dawkins (he’s one of famous new atheists)--I think it was the *God Delusion*, and you said

something like, “That’s a lot of heavy reading this early in the morning.” And then you said something like, “Are you trying to figure out if God is really there or not?” And I can’t remember what I said but you shared your story of how you came to know Jesus. (I didn’t tell her I was a pastor, of course; I never tell people that because they get all weird). She said, “I thought, “This is a little random,” but I had been thinking about how to know if God is there and if so how to know him, so I thought it was curious. She said “We went to get on the plane, and I sat like 2 rows behind you. I was bummed because I had forgotten my headphones, and she said somehow you struck up a conversation with the guy next to you and you shared the same story of how you came to know Jesus with him, but you went a lot deeper into who Jesus was and why he came. She said, “I don’t know if you know this, but you really don’t have an INSIDE voice, which means you were basically sharing all this with all 4–5 rows of the Comfort-Plus section.” She said at this point I was annoyed, because I’d just wanted to sleep on the flight--but I had no choice but to sit there and listen to you. She said, “Finally, we landed in ATL and my only thought was, “I can’t wait to get to ATL Bread Company and get a bagel.” I’m still half-awake and so I walk to the other end of the terminal and get in line and I hear someone talking ahead of me and I look up and I can’t believe it, it’s you again. She said, “I was so annoyed.” But the lady in front of you had 2 kids and she was having the hardest time finding her money to pay and you said, “Don’t worry about it, I’ll take care of yours” and you paid for her and her kids. So, I thought, “Well, this guy doesn’t know how to use an inside voice on a 6am flight, but at least he’s not a total jerk.”

OK, fast forward 6 months, she said. I am sharing some of my questions about God with a co-worker at Duke, and I brought up to her that I’d met this random guy at the gate area and some of the stuff you’d said. She keeps telling me she is praying for me and keeps inviting me to her church. Eventually I came--I mainly did it so she’d stop inviting me--and we sat down and out on stage walked... you. She said, “My jaw hit the floor. I said to my friend: That’s him. That’s the guy!”

Fast forward another 6 months, she’s been coming regularly and she receives Christ and gets baptized. Then a few months later she jumps onto the high school ministry team and now she’s one of my daughter’s small group leaders.

The first time I hear any of this story is when she’s standing in my kitchen. Now, none of this happens because I’m a pastor; being a pastor is an impediment to this, if anything. I’m just aware that God is always at work around me, and my job is to spread the aroma--to meet needs where I can, to ask questions, and to share my story, and just point people to Jesus--and see what surfaces. And there was someone else at Duke doing the same thing: just there to pray, and serve, ask questions, and make invitations.

Now, some of you hear this and you couldn’t imagine striking up a convo with a stranger reading a book on atheism. You’re not an extrovert. But hear this: **God doesn’t call only one personality type to be witnesses.** Your personality was designed specially by God for his purpose, and you can reach people I can’t. But for many of you, you are more like Timothy in the Bible whom Paul tells in 2 Timothy to “Do the work of an evangelist.” Paul tells him that because it doesn’t come naturally to him. For some of us evangelism seems natural; for others of you, you have to work at it. But the identity of “sent ones” and “witnesses” is for all of us.

And notice, all I am doing is asking questions. You can do that. Over the years I’ve stocked my arsenal with really good questions that can get the conversation going. One of the things I loved about this book is it had a few other really good ones.

- When someone shares something with you they are struggling with... **This really sounds like there are spiritual dimensions to this for you. Do you feel like you are on a spiritual journey?**

- **I've recently experienced a renewal in my prayer life. Is there anything I can pray for you about?** (BTW, I've found that when I say that to an atheist, they almost always say: "Well, number 1: I don't believe in God or the power of prayer. Number 2: Here are my requests.")
- (When talking with someone who was raised in a different religion than Christianity)--**What does your tradition say about Jesus?**

This week, on the front page of our website, we've got some great resources like these that can help you initiate these conversations, but to bring it back to our main point here: **Sent people have a rich theology of place.** I realize that God is always at work around me; I'm here in a specific place for a specific purpose--God has determined my personal borders--so open up your eyes! Look around! What do you see?

So, **put yourself out there, and ask questions, and tell your story,** because you never know when God is at work around you. BTW, numerous biblical analogies reinforce this. For example, **Scripture says we are:**

- **Farmers (Matt. 13:1-9):** farmers in those days were always casting seed. Some seeds never sprout. But some do.
- **Fishermen (Matt. 4:19):** a good fisherman always has his line in the water. I never know when God is going to send the big one under my boat, and I want to make sure my line is in the water when he does.
- My own analogy for this is a **(Metal detectors):** I'm always asking questions to see where God is at work. Many times nothing happens. (Just the other day I was flying back, again from ATL, sitting next to a woman and I was asking her about her life; I threw out several leading questions and they all bombed, like a lead balloon--I was about to give up, but right before I buried myself in my book she told me she was a nurse who worked with terminal patients and I said, "It's got to be hard working around death all the time." And she said, "To be honest, death scares me to death." And that led to an incredible conversation where I shared my story and what I love about Jesus. At one point in the convo she had told me she loved CFA, so before we deplaned I handed her a CFA Be-Our-Guest card that someone had given me, and I said, "Use this, and when you do, maybe consider the fact that you sitting next to me on this flight was not an accident... of all the people you could have set next to on this plane, God put you next to me so I could ask you these questions." She said, "Yeah, yeah... I'm already way ahead of you! I know this is not accidental.")
- One more: Scripture says we are **Royal Ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:20)**. Which means we have set up little outposts in this country, but we really represent the King of another country, and people can come to our embassy, so to speak, when they have a question for our King or need something from him.⁴

Which leads me to #3...

3. SENT people start with prayer

The author of SENT is a professor of English at Penn. St., which obviously is a secular school. She says that often before class she'll walk through the classroom and pray over their empty seats, sometimes even kneeling down beside them. Praying over them by name for blessing. Often I pray that verse from Psalm 119, "Turn their eyes from worthless things to you, the living the true God."

One spring, she said, I got a Facebook message from a parent. (She said, You never want to hear from a parent as a professor – it's always bad news.) But in this case, the woman said, "My husband and I are coming into town and we would really love to take you out to lunch."

⁴ One more: We are a Kingdom of priests. You are a priest or priestess. What do priests and priestesses do? They are there to represent God; to pray for people and relay God's message.

I knew their son, and I had always assumed he was a typical frat boy. But he'd come into class early, and one day, he said, "Do you and your husband have a great time tailgating at the football games?" Somehow in the convo it came out that my husband and I are not heavy drinkers, to which he said, "Well then what do you do for fun?" I told him a few things and he didn't seem that impressed, but that was it. .

The semester ended and his parents showed up on the break to take me out to lunch. The mom says, "We just wanted to tell you thank you. We almost lost our son last semester. We tried to raise him right, but then he came to Penn State, and he's partying and drinking all the time." She said, "But then a couple of months ago, he started talking about this Christian professor." (She said, "I had never told him directly that I was a Christian, just that I didn't get drunk, and I guess that was enough to communicate that to him.) He started wanting to drive home to go to church with us. We had been praying that God would send someone to open his eyes to the truth.

I shared with her that several times a week I prayed that very thing for her son, as I did several of my students-that God would turn their eyes away from worthless things, and when I said that she burst into tears. The husband, who was a mountain of a man, had been most quiet this whole time, said, "If you ever feel like what you are doing is making no difference, remember my son. We were so worried about him... and God sent YOU!"⁵

Listen, if you ever think that what you're doing is not worth it, realize YOU might be sitting next to someone, or rooming with them, or working with them, because someone out there prayed, "God, send someone."

4. SENT people listen for the Holy Spirit

Right after Jesus said, "As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you," he said:

[22] (And when he had said this), he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit..."

TBH, this is a little weird. I don't do this with my friends. Hey, Rick, swwww. But Jesus was filling them with the Holy Spirit. You say, "Didn't that happen at Pentecost?" Yes, but it wasn't like they had no interaction with the Spirit before Pentecost. Believers all throughout the Old Testament were filled with the Spirit at various times. At Pentecost was when the Holy Spirit permanently fused himself into the hearts of believers. So Jesus was giving them a preview, a foretaste.

And what it shows us is the importance of the Holy Spirit in being sent. Being SENT is not about doing great things for Jesus; being SENT means yielding yourself to the Spirit to be used by him. It means being perceptive to where he is at work around you and joining him.

Jesus said in John 5, "I never do things on my own initiative. I ONLY do what I see the Father doing around me." *I am not trying to do things FOR Jesus, I'm trying to do things with him.*

You may think you don't have that much potential or ability in ministry, but it's not about that anymore. It's not about what you can do for God, it's about what the Holy Spirit can do *through* you. Jesus said that one believer yielded to the Spirit had more potential in ministry than the most talented leader on the planet.

Trivia question: Who did Jesus think was the greatest preacher of all time? Who was Jesus' favorite preacher?

⁵ Holleman and Holleman, *Sent*, pp. 81–82.

Matthew 11:11, “Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. The greatest preacher ever to live. Watch this: **Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.**”

- First, what does it mean to be the least in kingdom of heaven? Least talented; least spiritual gifts; know the least about the Bible; you have the worst personality. You have the least of all of these.
- Think about it: Someone in here is the “least” in the kingdom of heaven in this room. I’m not saying that to be mean, just that mathematically that has to be true. Somebody is at the bottom. Right now, you’re sitting there thinking, “I think it might be me!” And God the Father is like, “Yes. It’s you. You’re at the bottom of the pile.” What I am telling you is even if that is true, you have more potential in ministry than John the Baptist.
- **Because you have something John never had—the permanent fusing of the HS to your soul and the knowledge of the resurrection. You see, if the HS is inside of you, it’s no longer about abilities for Jesus, but availability to his Spirit.**
- **God can do more through one willing vessel** than all the talent in the universe. **We have a really good example of this in Acts 8**: Philip was involved in a thriving ministry in Samaria when the Spirit of God led him to do something that made no sense—travel up to a region in the north in a barely populated part of the country. But there he was, in obedience to the Spirit, when along by came a man we now call “**the Ethiopian eunuch...**”
- The HS can do more through one surrendered vessel than all the Apostles had been able to accomplish on their own.

Which means we need to learn to listen for his guidance. Remember what Jesus said, **“I can only do what I see the Father doing...” John 5:19.**

If we’re going to be effective as SENT people, we have to develop the ability to pick up on what he is doing! The earliest Christians understood this. The book of Acts is not about them coming up with brilliant plans to reach their world and asking God to bless them. It’s about them prayerfully discerning where the Spirit was at work around them and joining him in it.

The Holy Spirit is the main planner, the main Actor, the Director in the book of Acts. Get this: **the Holy Spirit appears 59 times in the book of Acts; in 36 of those he is speaking, guiding!** I know things are different... they were writing the Bible. But you can’t convince me...

- **It’s like John Newton**, the Puritan said: “How can it be that which was so essential to the success of the 1st generation of the church has become unnecessary in ours?”
- **Now, I’ve told you: What’s sometimes frustrating to me is that of those 36x he speaks in Acts, Luke doesn’t tell us how he speaks. Acts 13:2...**
- But while there is ambiguity in how he sometimes speaks, there is no ambiguity in that he speaks
- **Which might explain why the denomination that does the best job motivating their people for missions work... Pentecostals! Guilt/gift**

This is why our mission statement begins with, “Following the Holy Spirit, we want to (make Jesus known in the Triangle)...”

- The Holy Spirit is the **main Actor in his Kingdom and in this church**, and SENT people know how to listen for his voice and follow him.

Finally, **(VAMP)**

5. SENT people see all of life as a platform of service

This is the one at the core of all of them. What is your basic identity in life? Are you here as an acquirer; here to make something of yourself; or is your primary identity someone who is SENT to serve.

There's a story I heard in seminary, and it went like this: *During the nineteenth century two Moravian missionaries--**John Dober and David Nitschmann**--became burdened to reach the inhabitants of a nearby island (now known as St. Thomas), most of whom had been taken there as slaves. They wanted to go and share the gospel with these slaves, but the plantation owners, who were not spiritual people at all, feared that if these slaves got their heads full of ideas of being made in the image of God and valuable to God they might revolt, so they said "No."*

So, the story goes the missionaries sold themselves into slavery in order to take the gospel to the islanders. As word spread about the brave sacrifice, Moravians up and down the Eastern Coast of the U.S... "May the Lamb that was slain..."

*That's inspiring, but it's not the actual story. **It is true that the plantation owners said no and these men offered to sell themselves into slavery if necessary.** But the owners said no to that too. So, these two guys boarded a ship (not in chains, as free men) on October 8, 1732 to live among the people of St. Thomas outside the plantation. They prayed and prayed over them, and looked for any chance to engage them.*

*"For fifty years they labored in the West Indies without any aid from any other religious denomination. It was hard work. Often mundane. Sometimes boring. **But when they finally died, they left 13,000 baptized converts on that island, and a streak of new churches in St. Thomas, St. Croix, Jamaica, Antigua, Barbados, and St. Kitts.**" That's the true story, and **honestly, I think the true version may be more inspiring to me than the exaggerated one.** It's one thing to to sell yourself into slavery in one dramatic gesture. But to get up every day and lay down your life for others---that takes a resolve and dedication that goes down iron your bones. **Their statement, "May the Lamb that was slain receive the reward of his suffering. . . "**⁶ was not said in one rhetorical flourish; it was said in they lived their lives.*

Do you think of yourself as here to acquire, here to make something of yourself, realize your dreams, or have a good time? Or are you SENT as Jesus might be SENT?

You likely won't show that in one big, dramatic, mission-field obedience moment. You might. But you will likely show it by living a life of service; a life of reaching out, and asking questions, and inviting others into your home, and sharing your story, and giving of yourself to meet the needs of others around you.

Because these 2 men obeyed, 13,000 slaves, and many more after that, came to Christ. **What's going to happen if you begin to live SENT?**

- *Maybe, for somebody here, because you put your "YES on the table" today, a people group in North Africa without a witness to the gospel will hear about Jesus.*
- *Or, maybe because you put your "YES on the table" today, a foster family in need of a break can get the help they need to continue in their ministry. Or you can become a SAFE family (as it's called).*

⁶ J. E. Hutton's History of the Moravian Church, Chapter 6. Repeated by Matt Papa in his song, "May the Lamb..."

- *Or, a prisoner ending his sentence can have a job and a faith community when he makes his way back into society.*
- *Or refugees in your community will feel like they aren't ALONE in a strange land.*
- *Or a person in your apartment complex or in your class at school will get a chance to hear about Jesus and experience the forgiveness of sins and eternal life in heaven!*

Jesus' main identity in the Gospel of John is "the SENT one." **"As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."** We are sent to others like Jesus was sent to us. **And that's our motivation**--if you are a Christian, the reason you are here, the reason you know God, the reason you have a hope and a future, is because Jesus was sent for you. You are here because he didn't live the life of privilege he was entitled to; he emptied himself, and became a servant to you; he washed your feet; took your shame, and died on a cross to save and redeem you. You owe him EVERYTHING. And now, he says to you, *"As the Father has sent me, so I send you. Be to others as I was to you."*

And we gladly do it--because those who believe the gospel can't help but become like the gospel. After Jesus gave up so much for us, we can't possibly not want to do that for others.

So, here's your next step: **Come to our SENDING 101 this week:** think of SENDING 101 as your portal to getting involved. It will acquaint you with all the ways you can 'live sent' and give you the next steps to engage... Check out the front page of our website or just open up your Summit App for info--and please register!

This whole week—Live Sent Week—is about broadening our understanding of what it means to live sent and giving you the first steps to get involved—or, for many of you, deepening that engagement. In addition to Sending 101, we have TRAININGS throughout the week to help you take your next step in 'living sent'—from **welcoming the prisoner** (where you can learn what it looks like to play a part in helping those coming out of incarceration start a new life in community), or **foster/adoption care**, or **ethnic unity and missions** (learning how you can become more engaged with what God is doing locally and internationally with ethnic unity). You can get connected to what we're doing locally and overseas. There's also a training where you can get involved in **supporting the missionaries we send**. All this right on the **front page of our website or front and center on your Summit App**—check it out and again, please register!

The whole point this weekend is for you to take another step in engaging what God is calling you to—because **he is calling you!** The question isn't is now longer *if* you are called to LIVE SENT, the question is only where and how. Take advantage of this!

Heads bowed:

- **YOUR RESPONSE:** Here am I, send me! This is your identity! When you begin to live it, you'll find that fullness of life you've been living for. "When you live like God, you get to feel like God!"⁷
- **MAYBE YOU ARE NEW HERE** and you say, "I don't know how I feel about you talking about these plans to convert me." I want you to know you are not a project to us. We're not just pretending to care about you

⁷ Ronald Rolheiser, *Sacred Fire*

so we can sell you something. But think of it this way: If we do care about you, and we believe this, wouldn't we want you to know that? Listen: we really believe Jesus is how you'll go to heaven and the only way you can discover the fullness of life you've been created for, so, we really want you to know him. So, I don't want to make you uncomfortable, but I want you to see that we believe this and we care about you.