STIGLER FIRST ASSEMBLY
LOVE GOD | LOVE PEOPLE

First Assembly of God - Jason Smith

John 20:19-22

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,[a] Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

20 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. 21 Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you.

As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." 22 And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

God is a sending God, and every believer is called to participate in His mission.

The Church is not merely called to gather; the Church is called to go.

In society today many don't care to gather, much less go.

Introduction

The Christian life is like a relay race.

Every generation receives the baton from those who came before them.

The question is never whether the race will continue.

The question is whether we will pass the baton to the next generation faithfully.

In 1914, a small group gathered in Hot Springs, Arkansas, to establish what would become the Assemblies of God.

At that meeting they made a remarkable declaration:

"We commit ourselves and the Movement to Him for the greatest evangelism that the world has ever seen."

What a bold statement.

Not the biggest buildings.

Not the largest denomination.

Not the most impressive programs.

The greatest evangelism the world has ever seen.

More than a century later, the question remains:

Will we continue what they started?

I. JESUS SENDS IMPERFECT PEOPLE

John 20:19-21

The disciples are hiding behind locked doors.

Fear has gripped them.

These are not spiritual superheroes.

These are broken men.

Peter denied Jesus.

Thomas doubted Jesus.

The others abandoned Jesus.

Yet these are the people Jesus chooses.

Imagine interviewing candidates to change the world.

Would you choose:

- A denier?
- A doubter?
- A quitter?

Jesus did.

Because **God has never looked for perfect people.**

He looks for available people.

Illustration

God has always used cracked vessels. **(SHOW PIC)**

A stained-glass window shines not because it is perfect but because light passes through it.

The power was never in the disciples.

The power was in the Christ who sent them.

Application

Many believers excuse themselves from missions because they feel inadequate.

God is not asking whether you are adequate.

He is asking whether you are willing.

II. SENDING IS THE HEART OF GOD

Jesus says:

"As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you."

Notice the pattern.

The Father sent the Son.

The Son sends the Church.

Sending is not something God does.

Sending is who God is.

Throughout Scripture

God sent Abraham from his homeland.

God sent Moses back into Egypt.

God sent the judges to deliver Israel.

God sent David to lead His people.

God sent the prophets to call Israel home.

God sent John the Baptist to prepare the way.

Then in the fullness of time:

God sent His Son.

John 1:14

"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us."

John 3:16

"For God so loved the world..."

Notice:

God loved.

God gave.

God sent.

Love always moves.

Love always sacrifices.

Love always goes.

Application

The question is not whether God is calling people.

The question is whether His people are listening.

III. THE ANTIOCH CHURCH: THE MODEL MISSIONS CHURCH

If Jerusalem was the birthplace of the church, Antioch was the launching pad of missions.

Acts 11 and 13 show us what a healthy missions church looks like.

Antioch Was A Witnessing Church

Acts 11:20-21

20 But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists[a] also, preaching the Lord Jesus. 21 And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord.

Ordinary believers shared the gospel.

Not apostles.

Not celebrity preachers.

Not seminary professors.

Ordinary Christians.

And revival broke out.

The church grew because believers understood that evangelism was everyone's responsibility.

Antioch Was A Giving Church

Acts 11:29

"The disciples, as each one was able..."

They gave.

Not because they were wealthy.

Because they cared.

They understood that generosity fuels ministry.

Illustration

A missionary cannot preach without being sent.

A church planter cannot plant without support.

A Bible cannot be translated without resources.

Someone must give.

Antioch Was A Praying Church

Acts 13:2

While they were worshiping, praying, and fasting, the Holy Spirit spoke.

Prayer always precedes sending.

Revival begins in prayer.

Missionaries are born in prayer.

Churches are planted through prayer.

Nations are reached through prayer.

Antioch Was A Sending Church

Acts 13:3

"They placed their hands on them and sent them off."

Notice:

They did not send leftovers.

They sent Barnabas.

They sent Saul.

They sent some of their best.

Real missions always costs something.

IV. THE TASK IS NOT FINISHED

It is tempting to think the job is done.

The church is growing worldwide.

Millions are coming to Christ.

Thousands of churches are being planted.

But the task remains unfinished.

Today:

- Millions worship Christ around the world.
- Hundreds of thousands of churches exist globally.
- Thousands of missionaries serve faithfully.

Yet billions still have little or no access to the gospel.

Entire people groups remain unreached.

Entire languages still need Scripture.

Entire villages have never heard the name of Jesus.

Beverly Graham's Challenge

"You don't measure yourself against your success; you measure yourself against the unfinished task."

Church, the unfinished task remains.

Not just overseas, but right here in Stigler. We've got work today. I realize some have written us off, but God is not finished with Stigler First Assembly.

V. EVERY CHURCH MUST BE AN ANTIOCH CHURCH

To finish the task we need churches that understand their assignment.

Every Church Shares.

Every Church Gives.

Every Church Prays.

Every Church Sends.

Not everyone will go overseas.

But everyone can participate.

Some go.

Some give.

Some pray.

Some send.

But everyone has a role.

Illustration

When a rocket launches into space, only one part reaches orbit.

But thousands of people make the launch possible.

Without engineers, fuel crews, technicians, and support teams, the rocket never leaves the ground.

The missionary may stand on the field.

But behind every missionary is a praying, giving, sending church.

VI. WE ARE NOT ALONE

The task can feel overwhelming.

Billions remain unreached.

Thousands of people groups remain untouched.

The challenge seems impossible.

Yet Jesus never intended us to do it alone.

John 20:22

"He breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'"

The same Spirit that empowered the disciples empowers us.

The same Spirit that opened Lydia's heart.

The same Spirit that shook prison doors.

The same Spirit that empowered Peter at Pentecost.

The same Spirit lives within the Church today.

The mission is impossible without Him.

But with Him, all things are possible.

Conclusion

Heaven does not celebrate our titles.

Heaven does not rejoice over our promotions.

Heaven rejoices when sinners come home.

Luke 15 tells us there is joy in the presence of angels over one sinner who repents.

That is why we send.

That is why we pray.

That is why we give.

That is why we go.

Because every soul matters.

Every tribe matters.

Every nation matters.

Every language matters.

And every person deserves an opportunity to hear the name of Jesus.

Call to Action

Today I want to ask three questions:

1. **Is God calling you to go?**
2. **Is God calling you to give?**
3. **Is God calling you to pray and send?**

Whatever your role may be, do not sit on the sidelines.

The Father sent the Son.

The Son sent the Church.

Now the Church must go.

Challenge

The gospel came to us because someone was willing to be sent.

The next generation, the next city, the next nation, and the next unreached people group will hear because someone in this room says:

"Here am I, Lord. Send me."

Amen.