

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

09.20.2026 | We Are Sent | John 20:19-23 | Dr. Ben Day, Senior Pastor

If you have a Bible this morning, I'd love for you to turn with me to John, Chapter 20. This morning we're going to be in John, Chapter 20, as we've mentioned a couple of times. We're starting this new series. It's going to be five weeks. If you've been with our church, we've been walking through the book of Acts for a couple of months or so. What we've seen in the book of Acts is at the very beginning of Acts, Jesus told his disciples that they were going to receive the Holy Spirit. And then when they received the Holy Spirit, they were going to be empowered by the Holy Spirit to go out and to be His witnesses. And they were first going to be His witnesses in the city right where they were, which was Jerusalem.

So what I want to do is I want to pause our study through the book of Acts. We're going to come back to Acts in about six weeks. But for these five weeks, I just want to make it a little bit more personal and a little bit more focused on our calling. But just as Jesus told his disciples they would receive the Holy Spirit and be empowered by the Holy Spirit to be sent out in that city of Jerusalem to be His witnesses, I want us just for these five weeks to really consider the fact that we've received that same Holy Spirit. We've been empowered by the Spirit of God for a purpose. We've been sent out to be witnesses of Jesus right here in our city.

So we're calling this series "Sent," this idea of being witnesses in our Jerusalem. What does it look like for us to live out this calling, being witnesses of Jesus right here in our city? And so today I just want to begin the series by thinking of this idea of being sent. Jesus told his disciples that they were being sent out to be witnesses. What does that mean for us to have been sent? And so I hope this sermon will help kind of introduce this whole idea of being sent to us. And I thought for us to be able to really grasp this idea, but also really hopefully begin to live it out. Of the following weeks, we'll see how do we actually do this. But today we would hear more clearly the calling to be sent out by God. And I will see that being sent out by God is not just something we have to do, a command we have to follow, but it is us being brought into the heart of God as he goes out, he sends out to pursue those who are far from him.

So I want to take us to John chapter 20 in which Jesus makes it clear that his followers are being sent out. Just to set the stage since we're kind of jumping into the book of John in the middle, or actually towards the end of it. Just to give you some context, Jesus has just been killed on Friday. His disciples have witnessed his arrest, probably many of them witnessed his crucifixion. Now they are in fear for what might happen to them, especially now the tomb has been found empty. The word has probably begun to spread that these disciples had something to do with it. They probably stole and hid the body or something. Some of the women who had gone to the tomb have now claimed to have seen Jesus and that's been shared with the disciples, but yet they've still not seen the risen Jesus. And this is why we find them in John chapter 20 locked in a room, because they are fearful. That's when Jesus shows up.

John chapter 20, we're just reading a few verses, verses 19 through 23 of John 20. John says on the evening of that day, which was 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 and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you." "As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them. If you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld."

You know, I was thinking about this idea of us being sent, us being called into this mission of God, just trying to introduce this idea for us in the series. I was thinking, you know, there's a few different ways you could think about that idea of us being sent out by God. Us being called into God's mission. There's a way that you could think of it as if it's kind of an optional activity. I know Mission Impossible is getting a little dated now, both from like the old show and then even the Tom Cruise versions of the movies. But in Mission Impossible, there was this kind of phrase that always came on, the beginning of the mission, and it said, "Your mission if you choose to accept it." I think sometimes people could think of the mission of God and the mission of the church as that kind of mission. Here's your mission if you choose to accept As if it's optional. As if it's maybe not for everybody. Maybe we think that that part of the mission of going out and reaching people is for missionaries. It's for pastors. It's for people who vocationally give themselves to some kind of Christian ministry. Maybe it's for people who aren't in Christian ministry, but they just have that gift. But maybe we think that it's optional. It's not for all of us.

Or maybe when we think about the mission of God and going out and reaching those who are lost, we might be convinced that it is for everyone, but we might still see it mostly as a command for everyone to follow. A calling that you kind of have to carry out if you want to be a good Christian because this is what all Christians are supposed to do. There's a way you can think about this calling of being involved in God's mission that makes it for everyone, but really still kind of makes it a duty or an obligation. Don't get me wrong, I do think God has commanded each one of us to go and to glorify him by speaking about who he is and what he has done. But I do think that if we primarily think of being involved in God's mission as a calling or, excuse me, probably more of a command or an obligation, that it's not going to have the same heart that we are supposed to have.

I think rather than thinking about this being involved in the mission of God as primarily something Christians have to do, rather I would want us to come close to the heart of God. To spend some time thinking about the heart of our heavenly Father, how there is a love that is God, that God is love, and there is this love that comes from God, a love that pursues, a love that goes out, a love that is constantly being sent out to the world. And to see that we have both been recipients of that love, but now we are called to be involved in the outpouring of that love to others. It would be my prayer that as we go throughout the series, we would start to see that being involved in the mission of God, of sharing the gospel with those who are around us or those in the neighborhood of our church, less as a duty or an obligation and more of an opportunity to be involved in the heart and the love of God.

And so as we introduce the sermon, I just kind of want to give us a main idea that I think will help us think about this sermon, but also hopefully this whole series of what does it mean for us to be sent? Yes, God has called us to this. Yes, there is something we are responsible for, but it's even more than that. That what we see in this passage, I think from these words of Jesus, is that God loves and pursues the lost. And he has now sent us to do the same. What does it mean for us to be sent? I would think about it like this. God loves and pursues the lost and he has now sent us to do the same. This idea of being sent should not start with us and our calling. It should start with God. That God is the one who is always pursuing. God is the one who is always sending. He has a love that is within him that is always moving outward. We are the people of God or people who have been recipients of this love. And now we are to be caught up in the flow of God's outward love in such a way that it would bring us out to others. Rather than seeing it as something we kind of have to do, I hope that we would be caught up in the outward flow of God's love. That is eternally welling forth from him to those who are far from him. And we would be an expression of that in our lives. In our church.

So what you see at the very heart of this passage and all that Jesus says, I think he makes really clear the heart of God and how we are now brought into this heart. This is it right here in the middle of this passage in verse 21. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you." And he said, "As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." So it's really clear here is that those who were followers of Jesus are now being brought into the mission that Jesus was on. That while Jesus was coming down to earth to get them to follow him, now something has shifted where they're not only following him, his life, his teachings, his example, but they are also supposed to go out and to share that with others. What I want you to see this morning is that this is what God's love has always been doing. And now we are involved in it. And to try to help you to see this,

I just want to get into a little bit of what we might call Trinitarian theology here for just a moment. So we're going to talk about just some theological ideas, but I think they're really important to seeing what Jesus is saying in this passage, in this statement, "Even as the Father has sent me, so I am sending you." You see, the Bible says that there is one God who has always existed in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And what the Bible helps us to see is that each one of these three are distinct persons. The Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Spirit. They are all different. They are all distinct. But yet there is only one God. There is only one essence. The church fathers even spoke about this, that God is one in essence, but three in persons. Now, I think this is really important when you think about Jesus's words here, that as the Father has sent me, because you could hear that, and you could think that there was a time up in heaven in which the heavenly Father pulled the Son in and said, "Son, I've got something I want you to do." And the Son comes to him and says, "You know what, Dad? I've got you. I'll carry out this mission." And so the Son has been sent by the Father. You could even see it sometimes as if the Trinity is like three people who just get along really well. As if they all are just totally in sync. They're just all totally in agreement. And so what one decides to do, the other, oh yes, they're just totally in agreement on. The Father wants to send the Son, the Son wants to go. But you have to remember, there's

only one God. That means the one God who has won in essence really only has one divine will. It's not as if the Father and the Son and the Spirit have separate wills that have to agree. There is one will in God.

Why is this so important? Why are you talking to us about this theology, Pastor Ben? Well, because here's what I don't want you to think of, the Father sending the Son as if just kind of part of God is coming to earth. Rather, the Son coming to earth is the full expression of God's love for those who are far from him. When Jesus came down, it was not just the Father sending the Son, it was God taking on flesh and dwelling among us to save us even though we had strayed from him. Book of Ephesians chapter 2 talks about the state that we were in before Jesus came and found us, before God pursued us. It says that we were dead in our sins, but we weren't just dead as if we were kind of doing nothing, but we were living in that death by following the patterns of this world and following the very enemy of God. Meaning before, God came and found us, we were rebelling and straying from God. But, Ephesians 2 says, God was rich in mercy to those who rebelling against him.

God had a great love for those who had strayed far from him, so much so that he came and took on flesh and dwelt among us. That God is the Good Shepherd who leaves the 99 and comes after each one and puts us on his shoulders and carries us back to the flock. And by the way, for him to do that meant that he had to lay down his life. It's not just the Son laying down his life on kind of in place so that the Father could be happy, it is God giving himself so that we could be reconciled to him. The whole reason the disciples are in a room hiding with the doors locked is because their rabbi has just been killed. Why was he killed? Because God loves those who are sinners. God loves and pursues the lost. There is something that we see in scripture in which there is this great eternal love that is God, that is just constantly moving outward. That the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, those three, they share in this love so eternally, that's just constantly moving outward. Creation was an act of God's love moving outward for him to create. Redemption was an act of God's love moving outward for him to pursue those who were lost.

Now we, as the people of God, who have been united to Jesus by faith, we who have received that unconditional, unearned love of God, now we are caught up in this flow outward to bring this love to other people. I just hope you would see this morning that Jesus coming as sent by the Father is God's love shown to you. Here is the full expression of the Father's love to you, to us as sinners. God's love is moving outward and now we are caught up in this outward flow as the people of God. Oh, I pray over these next five weeks that I myself would begin to see this more clearly, that you would join me in it, that we would not just think that we have to be sent out, but that we have the opportunity of being part of what God's love has been doing for all of eternity, since creation, moving outward, redeeming those who are lost, saving those who are far from him. Now we have the opportunity to do the same, to be involved in God's outward love. Now, how do we do this?

Like how did the disciples move from people who are fearful and locked in a room to going out and actually being witnesses to Jesus? How do the disciples move from being so concerned for their safety, for their well-being, to being willing to go out and boldly proclaim the name of Jesus and preach the gospel no matter what the cost? I think it's all found in what Jesus says around this statement. Surrounding Jesus' statement about him being sent and now sending the disciples, there's a few things that I think help us understand how we can live as people who are sent, how God does not just send us out on our own, but he actually equips us to be sent on mission for him. Three areas that I just want to point out for you and what Jesus says here, ways that we are sent and equipped by God. First, we are sent with the peace of God. We are sent with the peace of God. The song that we just sang talked about how there is peace within God's presence.

Put yourself in the sandals of the disciples for just a moment. I mean, think about what they've just been through. They have entered into Jerusalem on a Sunday, which Jesus was welcomed in like a king. People were waving palm branches and putting down their coats. And then they were in Jerusalem for the week and Jesus is in the temple. He's teaching and he's talking about things that are going to come and maybe cryptic ways. And all of a sudden, they have a Passover meal. They get to share with Jesus. They're in the garden while Jesus is praying. Then Jesus is arrested. Now he's been killed. Now he's shown back up, risen from the dead. I mean, what a week it has been for them. When Jesus shows up and it says in verse 19, "On that Sunday, that evening, the doors were locked and the disciples were in fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

Now this word for peace in Hebrew, the Jewish culture is shalom. Probably many of you know this is a common greeting for those people of the speak Hebrew or just in the Jewish faith. Shalom is a common way to greet. So you could read this and you could think maybe Jesus is just greeting his disciples. Or maybe you could think about all that they've just been through. And maybe he is giving them some type of word of peace because they feel like they've just seen a ghost. I mean, they thought Jesus was dead. And here he is walking through a locked door, showing up in their midst. And maybe he just calmed their troubled hearts. And he says to them, "Peace be with you." But then something kind of interesting happens. Keep reading on, verse 20. "When he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. And Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you."

You kind of have to wonder, why does Jesus say this twice? Seems pretty clear that this isn't just the normal greeting. Or he probably wouldn't have said it again. Probably it's kind of clear that it's not just Jesus calming troubled hearts. I mean, it says that he had already shown him his hands and his side. They knew this was really Jesus. It said they were already glad that they had seen the Lord. And yet Jesus tells them again, "Peace be with you." What does Jesus repeat himself here? I don't know for sure, but I do wonder if in Jesus repeating these words, would the disciples start to think about what Jesus had told to them just maybe days before? That he says to them, "My peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. In the world you're going to have trouble, but take heart I have overcome the world." He tells them that there is a peace that you can have within me.

You see, the word for shalom, it doesn't just mean peace in the sense of like absence of conflict or the absence of war. What shalom really means is that everything is in its right place, like that kind of peace. I think Jesus repeats himself here about this idea of shalom, peace being with them, to speak a greater deeper reality. That what he has just done in dying on the cross and then raising from the dead has brought a shalom to them, a peace to them. That everything in the sense of their relationship with God has been made right. Because of what Jesus has just accomplished, he has made right their relationship with God. He has restored them to the place where they were created to be in a relationship with the God who created them.

Here's the way D.A. Carson who wrote a great commentary on John said it. He said, "Jesus's shalom on Easter evening is the complement of it is finished on the cross. For the peace of reconciliation and life from God is now imparted." I think Jesus is letting his disciples know there is a peace that he has given him in this work, a peace that is only in him, a peace that the world can't offer and a peace that the world can't take away. When the disciples walk out of that room and begin to share the name of Jesus, speak of the good news of Jesus, no matter what comes their way, they will not lose this peace that Jesus has given them. They have been made right with God and they will be so for all of eternity and that gives a peace that the world can't rob. No Jewish religious leader, no Roman authority, no persecution that they face, none of it can take away the peace that they have with God through Jesus.

And so it is with us. When we go out and we are sent to be witnesses of Jesus in our city, no matter what we face, no matter what rejection, opposition, no matter if you were to lose your job or to lose your relationship or maybe in certain parts of the world if you were to lose your life, there is a peace with God that cannot be taken from you. That even our enemy cannot steal from us. We have a peace as we've been sent and we have the to bring that peace to others. I mean that song about speaking the name of Jesus, we're not just talking about a peace in our own lives, we're talking about bringing peace to others as we speak the name of Jesus. We are sent with the peace of God enveloping us, surrounding us no matter what we face and we have the opportunity to bring that peace into other people's lives, into other spaces. We have the opportunity to take our firehouse and turn it into a place of peace which people can come in and find a peace with God.

The disciples, we are sent out with the peace of God. We're not just sent out as if we're at peace with God away from him, but secondly the disciples are sent out with the presence of God. We ourselves are sent with the presence of God. This is the second thing I want you to see. How can the disciples do this? One, there is this peace that Jesus has imparted to them in his death and resurrection, but secondly there is this presence that they have with them. Again, think about the disciples. For two or three years at least now, they've been walking with Jesus each and every day and the times when they were sent out they knew they were coming back to get to be with him. They don't know it, but now Jesus is going to soon ascend to heaven and they will not see him anymore.

I mean he's told them that this is going to happen, but they don't fully know it yet, but Jesus has told them also that when he will actually be better because they will know his presence in a deeper way. That when he goes to heaven the Holy Spirit will come and he speaks about this even now. In verse 22, "After he said, as the Father sent me so I'm sending you, it says he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit." Now you hear that and it gets kind of confusing, doesn't it? Because I know we've just been walking through the book of Acts and I know in the book of Acts it tells us the disciples received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, like 50 days after this. So what's going on here is the Holy Spirit being sent twice? Is the Bible contradicting itself? Here's what I think is happening. I think Jesus is kind of acting out a parable. I think Jesus is doing something symbolic. I think he is telling them that they will receive the Holy Spirit, but while he is right there in their presence he breathes on them to communicate something.

You see in the Greek the word spirit could also be used as the word for breath. I think Jesus as he breathes on them he lets them know that as the Spirit comes to you it will be as if you are receiving the breath of God. It will be as if you are receiving my breath. It will be within your lungs just as the Spirit will you. And not only that, I think about how intimate of an act it is to breathe on somebody. I mean somebody's got to be pretty close to you for you to feel their breath, right? Like I know we live in a post-COVID world where we're all kind of very aware of how much people breathe on us. And like during COVID, like people could be across the room but we still wanted them to be masked up because we did not want them breathing on us. But for the most part when it says somebody breathes on you, you got to be pretty close to them. Like Jesus is still very close to his disciples. They're still touching his hands and his side as he breathes on them.

And I think he wants them to know that even when I ascend to heaven it's going to be as if I am this close to you because you'll have the Holy Spirit of God inside of you. That no matter where you go it won't just be one person, Jesus in the flesh, that you'll come to and ask questions. But the Spirit of God will be living inside of you. He says go and make disciples of all nations to the ends of the earth and wherever you go know that I am with you always. The disciples are sent here with the presence of God. And so it is with us. When you trust in Jesus and receive the Holy Spirit you have the presence of God in your life in a unique way. Yes he is omnipresent in the world but he lives within you.

I know that there are times when you don't feel it. I know maybe even you wonder just how distant God is from you because you don't know, you don't feel his presence right now but the Bible says that his presence is within you if you are a believer in Jesus. That as you are sent out you are not sent out on your own. You are sent with the presence of God. And again like the peace of God that not only gives us comfort but it gives us an opportunity. We have the chance to bring God's presence to people, to places. Again God is already there. He is already at work but with the Spirit inside of us we have the chance to bring God's redemptive presence into a space as we step into that space and we bear witness to who God is, to what Jesus has done. We have the chance to make the the firehouse a place where God's presence is made known and people can experience the presence of God. As the disciples receive the Holy Spirit they receive the presence of God but they also receive the power of God.

But specifically I think what Jesus tells them here is that they have the power of the gospel and this is the last thing that I just want us to consider and it will be done. That we are people who have been sent in this outward flow of God's love and we are sent with the peace of God. We are sent with the presence of God and we are sent with the power of God within us as the Spirit but the power of the gospel. The good news of what Jesus has done. It is a message that contains a great deal of power. I think Jesus makes it clear and the last thing that he says in this passage, he says in verse 23, "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them. If you withhold the forgiveness from any, it is withheld." Now if all we ever had in the Bible was like this one verse, we might get the impression that the apostles had the power to forgive sins. But we know that only God has the power to forgive sins.

I don't think that Jesus is telling them they have the opportunity to go out and and proclaim forgiveness in and of themselves. But what they do have the power to do is go out and proclaim a message of forgiveness that God has offered forgiveness in Jesus. See Jesus is telling them you have a great deal of power in the message of the gospel. You have the opportunity to take people's guilt and to take people's shame and to let them know it doesn't have to be there anymore. You have the opportunity to bring freedom from addiction, freedom from strongholds into somebody's when you go out and you preach the gospel to them. It says you have the opportunity to proclaim forgiveness. This is what Peter does at Pentecost. People say how can we be saved from our sins? Jesus says repent, believe in Jesus, and you can know that you are forgiven. I can stand with someone in the baptistry as they proclaim their faith in Jesus and I can say

you have been washed clean. Not because of a power within me, but because of the power of the gospel. So you have that same power as well. When you go out and you speak to people, you have the opportunity to assure them that all of their wrongdoings have been forgiven. That their eternal life is secure. It's a great power. It's a great opportunity.

But of course, what does Spider-Man teach us? That with great power comes great responsibility. Listen, I know from the beginning of the sermon, I said I don't want us going out to share Jesus to be a duty, an obligation, something we have to do. It is an opportunity. But because of the power of the gospel, it is a great responsibility. Like we should love people like God loves them to want to go out, but we should also feel the weight of the opportunity to speak forgiveness into their lives, eternal life into their lives by sharing the good news of Jesus with them. It's been some years now, probably about a decade ago, but there's this guy in Las Vegas. I think he's still in Vegas. His name is Penn Gillette. He's a well-known entertainer. He's a well-known atheist. He's really against kind of religion. He's against the idea of God and very outspoken about it. And one time, it's probably been about a decade now, but he filmed this video that he uploaded online. He talked about this experience that he had. He said after one of their shows, he was outside meeting people, just kind of being nice to the fans. He said there was one guy who was just kind of lingering, waiting to talk to him, obviously. And this guy had a Bible. When Penn Gillette went up to him, he just said the guy was very nice. He was very polite. Basically just said, "Listen, I know you're an atheist. I just feel called to give you. I just need you to know that God loves you." You know what Penn Gillette said? He said, "I really respect that man." He said, "Listen, I'm not convinced of anything about God. I'm not giving my life to the God of the Bible, but I respect that man because he really believes something, and he cared about me enough to even make it awkward and talk to me about it, knowing what I believe." And then he said this. This is my words. This is the words of an atheist. He said, "How much do you have to hate somebody to believe in eternal life and not talk to them about it?"

Now listen, I don't think you probably hate anybody, but I think you're probably often like me and you're kind of apathetic towards people. I mean, how apathetic do we have to be towards people that we're not willing to get out of our own comfort zones and make things just a little bit awkward when forgiveness is available to them? How apathetic do we have to be to the people of our community that we wouldn't carve out a little time in our schedules to be in the firehouse, to be present with them, that they might hear about the forgiveness of sins? There is this great power in the gospel, and we have the opportunity and the responsibility to share it with others. And I just feel the responsibility to put it before you this morning. Do you know the forgiveness that comes to the name of Jesus? Do you know the peace that is in his presence through trusting in what Jesus has done for you? Oh, God loves you. He is pursuing you. I think there's a reason he has you here this morning, to hear from him.

If you're here this morning and you're not a believer in Jesus and you're not a follower of him, I just want you to know that we're really glad that you're here. I do just want you to know that there is an opportunity for you to be forgiven of anything that you've ever done wrong. There's an opportunity for you to experience peace, everything being made right, as Jesus can restore you back to the relationship with God that you were created to have. Maybe for the first time this morning, you'll trust in Jesus and know the forgiveness that is within him. For those of us who have believed, will we see the heart of God for those who are far from him? The love, the pursuit, will we join in on this? Take this opportunity and this responsibility to share this powerful message with others.