

Yr. C, Wednesday 5 in Lent—Go  
April 10, 2019  
Preached by the Rev. Furman Buchanan  
St. Peter's Episcopal Church  
1162 Words

Lessons: Isaiah 40:27-31  
Psalm 146:2-8  
Matthew 10:5a, 7-14, 16-20

The moment the twelve disciples were transformed into the twelve *apostles* was not after the resurrection when Jesus gave them the Great Commission, nor was it Pentecost when they received the unsettling gift of the Holy Spirit and the challenge of spreading the love of Christ beyond their familiar and comfortable Jewish boundaries.

According to St. Matthew—one of those *twelve disciples*—the moment they became apostles was not very long after they began being disciples. No sooner had Matthew been called to leave his tax booth and follow Jesus than he was sent out to do the kind of healing and teaching that Jesus did.

As we just heard, Jesus says “Go, proclaim the good news...cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, and cast out demons.” An apostle is one who is sent. An apostle is one who is told to *go* and get to work.

How do you feel about being sent out with that kind of responsibility? The challenging news of the Gospel is that you and I *are called by Jesus* in order *to be sent forth* to do impossibly difficult, faithful, and loving things.

Jesus also tells the disciples *not* to take a lot of money and things with them, but rather to be vulnerable with and among those whom they serve. How would you feel about being sent out so miserably under-equipped? The challenging news of the Gospel is that you and I *are called by Jesus* in order *to be sent forth* to do impossibly difficult, faithful, and loving things.

“See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves...” Jesus says to his disciples—now as then. So, how do you feel about being sent out into a threatening, confusing world? The challenging news of the Gospel is that you and I *are called by Jesus* in order *to be sent forth* to do impossibly difficult, faithful, and loving things.

One of the hardest challenges for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Christians to overcome, particularly in the economically privileged parts of the world, is the assumption that we are *only* called to *gather* in Church buildings and *consume* religious teaching, preaching, music, and programming. This is not a valid, Christian assumption.

Rather, this entitled, false assumption is that if we—and our favorite people—gather together to consume these things, then we will become inoculated from damnation, and maybe danger or trouble. If we’re lucky we might get insulated from all the people we don’t trust or respect or prefer to be around.

As we heard in the Gospel this evening, nothing could be farther from either the teaching or the example of Jesus and the disciples he calls and then sends out into the world.

If we read the Gospels carefully and consider the challenging words of Jesus prayerfully, we will begin to realize that we are *called by him* in order to be *sent by him*. Likewise, we gather in his name (in here) in order to be dispersed to *serve* in his name (out there).

You see, the door of the Church is not only an *entrance* for the broken and weary to come in and be forgiven and healed. It is also an *exit* for those who have been strengthened, healed, and renewed to go forth and serve.

If I were in charge of all the Church facilities in the world, I would like to install revolving doors everywhere as an outward and visible reminder that that our coming in and our going out are one, continuous, cycle of faithfulness. We are called in order to be sent. We are gathered in order to be dispersed.

As we sang a few moments ago, “Spread, O spread, thou mighty word, spread the kingdom of the Lord, that to earth’s remotest bound all may heed the joyful sound.”<sup>1</sup>

One of the great gifts of Presiding Bishop Michael Curry to what *he calls* “the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement” is that he tells the truth of Jesus, even by using that description of the Church. Presiding Bishop Curry gets the fact that the Church is a *movement* in which people go forth. The church is not a static place where people just sit and listen, deciding what they like and don’t like.

Michael Curry is expressing the timeless truth about the nature of the Church that the Church, itself, has failed to fully remember and practice for the past 2000 years.

British theologian Lesslie Newbigin put it succinctly in his book, *The Open Secret*. “The Church does not *have* a mission. The Church *is* a mission!”

Think about what you have observed in your own faithful life in various congregations in lots of different places. Congregations which fight are congregations who focus inwardly and fearfully on what is wrong, and are preoccupied with who deserves the blame. On the other hand, congregations which are healthy are congregations which focus outwardly and hopefully on serving others, and are *not* preoccupied with who deserves the credit.

Just look at the example of Jesus’ first disciples. When they argued with each other, their focus was inward—Who is the greatest among us? What special seat of honor can I get? When the disciples were at their best is when they were sent—going out like doves in the midst of wolves, turning the world right side up with healing, teaching, and loving in Jesus’ name.

And so tonight we are focused on the spiritual practice summed up in the word “go.” Going forth in Jesus’ name, by definition, means crossing boundaries (which he and his apostles did all the time). Going forth in Jesus’ name, by definition means listening deeply to the needs of people (which he and his apostles did all the time.) Going forth in Jesus name, by definition, means responding to those needs with faith, hope, and love (which he and his apostles did all the time).

The way of love is, by definition, a journey...a pathway. And the only way to *know it* is to *go forth and follow it*. The way of love is the discipline to which Jesus calls all his apostles—not just the first twelve, but all of us. Remember, Jesus calls us in order to send us. Jesus gathers us in order to disperse us.

So, go! Go forth in obedience to Jesus’ call, just like those first twelve apostles did. Cross boundaries for the sake of love—just like Jesus and his first apostles did. Listen deeply to others for the sake of love—just like Jesus and his first apostles did. Respond compassionately to the needs of the world for the sake of love—just like Jesus and his first apostles did.

This is how we can live the way of love as we sang earlier this evening:

“Spread, O spread, God’s mighty word, spread the kingdom of the Lord, that to earth’s remotest bound all may heed the joyful sound.” Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Hymnal 1982*, #530