



COME & SEE

LIVING SENT

Sunday 30 April 2023

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

In our study of John, something I noticed over and over was that the most common designation or reference Jesus gives of Himself and his identity is as being sent.

John 4:34 *"My food," "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.*

John 5:30 *By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.*

John 6:29 *Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."*

We can do this another 40 times just in John and you'll start to get the picture... On sheer volume, you would have to conclude that the primary way Jesus viewed his identity was as a Sent One. I got to thinking, what does that even mean? **How was Jesus sent? And why was Jesus sent?**

How was Jesus sent?

- **Sent in delight** - Jesus in John 17 says, *"the Father has loved Him before the creation of the world"* (that's forever!), and in Luke 3 at Jesus' baptism the Father speaks and says, *"This is my Son in whom I'm well pleased."*
- **Sent in power** - *"Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about Him spread through the whole countryside."*
- **Sent in authority** - *"...all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."*
- **Sent to a specific people, time and place** - In Matthew 15, His assignment was to the lost sheep of Israel. His primary ministry lane was to the nation of Israel.

Why was Jesus Sent?

- **To bring the good news of the Kingdom** – Luke 4 says, *"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."*
- **Sent to do good works of the Kingdom** – Matthew 4 says, *"Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, AND healing every disease and sickness among the people."* Ultimately that Good news and good work culminates and is completed in His death and resurrection

What I notice in all of Jesus' references to being sent is that the most important aspect of being sent is not the assignment but, in fact, the Sender. Before we talk about who we are being sent to or the thing we are sent to do, note that most of the time Jesus focuses on Who He was sent from. His understanding of being sent centred on being in a timeless intimate bond of love and relationship with the One who sent Him: His Father, the Sender. Jesus' identity was not what He was sent to do but Who was sending Him. It was deeply relational. This idea of being sent is more about identification with the Sender than the assignment you've been sent on. Jesus' focus was relationship with His Father and His work flowed from that. I think I am very good at flipping this – becoming focused on the task and forgetting the Father...

For example, one of the first questions people ask each other when making small talk is, "What do you do?" Asking, "Who do you come from?" would be just weird... We derive a lot of identity from what we do, and that's in some good part because we were designed to live with purpose, but perhaps that really is quite secondary to the main source of your identity – you are a child of God.

Now in John 17, Jesus says, *"My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world."*

And in John 20, *"Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that, he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.""*

Jesus says, *"As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."* In fact, there are several sending passages like this. Let me give you another 3 sending passages:

The great commission of Matthew 28:19–20 – *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

But Jesus also commissions His disciples in Luke 24:46-48 – *He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”*

And in Acts 1:8 – *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

Together with our John passage, we learn as the Father sent Jesus, so Jesus sends us. We are sent in the same delight, the same power and authority of the Spirit, to all kinds of people not necessarily like us (local and to the ends of the earth) with a message of the good news of the Kingdom and to do good works of the Kingdom which God has prepared in advance!

Not just the Apostles, not just missionaries, or people who work at the church – but ALL believers are called to live our lives as Sent Ones!

Today marks the launch of Mission Month. We are raising \$110,000 for mission, to participate in the sending of others. I think this ministry of financially partnering with others to the ends of the earth is right, biblical and important, and I hope your hearts will be moved to be generous to support those sent to places we are not.

But don't think that you are not also sent. You have a Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, Ends of the earth... As the Father sent Jesus, so Jesus sends YOU. How do you feel about that? Especially all us introverts! Or how about all us 'really busy' people?

You've probably been wondering what this old accordion is up here... In the late 1920's through the 1930's, my great grandfather Joseph Fredrick Curtis (Laurie's father), in the latter part of his life, would preach the gospel and play this accordion on the inner city streets of Sydney. Inside this accordion box is his almost 100-year-old story... And I'd like to read it, just as he wrote it.

HOW I LOST MY EYE AND STARTED OPEN AIR WORK

It happened this way. I started a business in my own back yard, not even asking God what he thought of it. Everything was going good and I was making money. As a Church Officer and Secretary I began to neglect my duties to God and the Church.

I could see big factories, employing a lot of men and women and a beautiful motor car and the devil was helping me on in my venture. God let me go on for some time; when I started to neglect God He spoke, I missed death by seconds in the workshop (my mate standing with a face as white as chalk seeing my narrow escapes). These happened within

a couple of weeks. The next one (the third) was under an electric train at Redfern Station. We had finished work and hundreds of men were on the platforms and I fell between the carriages and was in a position I could not move. The Guard gave the right away. I heard the bell but was helpless; the train started to move. I could see it all, but was helpless and, just as the wheel was near me, it stopped!

Two men saw me fall and ran to the driver and told him there was a man who had fallen under the train and he stopped it.

The other man reached down and gave me a lift up. I was as calm as if nothing had happened. I experienced the peace that passeth understanding. God was guarding me even in these warnings. I still went on in my mad career.

God said, "Go your own way," and I did till one night, at half past ten, an accident happened and my eyes were filled with molten metal. I was taken to Hospital and they tried to save the eye and while lying there God spoke (weeks in bed with sandbags to keep my head from moving).

I heard that voice as if it were a living one speaking to me, and this is what it said: "What about that promise of ten years ago"? I said, "Lord take me, use me and if the eye is going to be a hindrance to the work you have for me to do, take it, it is gone". I have fulfilled that promise.

This is what I promised God ten years ago. Before Laurie was four years old, he was taken to Hospital with no hope of getting better. I prayed to God if he would give me back the lad, I could go into the open air and do such wonderful things for Him. Well, God took me at my word and gave us back the boy but I let God down. I worked harder in my Church but He was so patient and waited ten years to see if I could do my part; and now, for nearly fourteen years, I have been travelling the streets of Sydney rain, hail or shine and He has blessed the messages and is still blessing them today.

In Concord Streets, a picture one does not see very often: two women standing at the gate concerned where they will spend Eternity, and two a little further back. I said, "Two seeking Salvation and two seeking the world."

I do wonder about some of my great grandfather's understanding of God but I have no doubt about his transformation from someone living his own way and then, through a series of near misses, crises and tragedies, hearing the voice of God calling him, surrendering his life to Jesus in such a way as he lived the last part of his life quite differently to the first part: as a sent man on a mission, in the power of the Spirit with a message to all kinds of people in inner Sydney. I also understand his reluctance and distraction...

My grandfather, Laurie, followed in his steps with a state-of-the-art film projector in the 60's and 70's sharing the gospel through film. I started my ministry at this church and my first tool of mission was a skateboard, and a truck full of ramps... The Curtis men, of which I count myself, are like all families: full of flaws and failings; but I'm thankful to follow in their sense of sent-ness... Following the way of Jesus is, I think, inseparable from living as Sent Ones.

I wonder from time to time about my children and grandchildren; I pray they will not only know they are called but they live Sent: sent in the power of the Spirit, to all kinds of people, with a message of good news. I know that I have some part to play in that, I know you have some part to play in that, but the Holy Spirit has a much larger part.

So what does it mean to live sent?

- **Sent by** – finding your identity in the Sender, not in the assignment you've been given. We all have different gifts, abilities, capacities and contributions to make, but we all have the same Sender and our identity is in Him.
- **Sent with** – delight, the Spirit's empowering, authority and gifting, the Word of God. We have everything we need to live Sent.
- **Sent to** – Jesus, as I said, had a ministry lane to Israel first. In Matthew 28, Jesus expands the assignment of the Disciples to Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth... And along the way, different disciples found they were sent to different people right across the world.

Nothing has really changed: we are generally sent and yet also discover a lane of your life's contexts – family, local community, your work community or other communities – car club, P&C, gym... Sometimes it's piano accordions, or film projectors, or skateboards...

But, being sent is not so much an assignment or a destination which you turn on or off, but Living Sent is a way of seeing your whole life, and every moment of your life, as purposeful in Christ and precious for reasons greater than yourself.

Do you know, between the 2016 and 2021 Census, an additional 2 million Australians decided that they would describe themselves as having no religion (previously primarily Christian religion) rather than identifying with one – and that figure would have been worse by several hundred thousand if not for net migration of Christians into Australia.

There are many deep reasons for this but at the heart, I think we have lost our sense of "sent-ness"... You will leave here today, but you are not going – you are being Sent! May you find your identity in the Sender, and may you join in being sent by Him to wherever He leads.

A prayer:

Father,

We are going but more so, You are sending us – in joy and delight, filled with Your Spirit, power and authority to be bringers of good news and good redemptive work to the people You are sending us to. Sending us to our families, or neighbours, our workplaces and work colleagues, our customers and clients, our school friends, our teachers and our sporting teams. Indeed, wherever You may send us, help us to believe that one calling, one ministry of work, is not more significant than another. We each have something to give and something to do with faithfulness and diligence. But mostly, we have someone to be – a son or daughter of the King, beloved, graced, the object of Your pleasure. Father, may we remember who we are and Whose we are as we are now sent to faithful service in your harvest field.

Amen.