

Living a “Go To” Life

Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

INTRODUCTION

Two weeks ago today we commissioned a group of 23 individuals and sent them to Port Huron, MI – a combination of high school students and adult chaperones. Their theme for the week was “Go Serve.” This past week many of us have listened as they talked about their experiences while they were gone. Later this year all of us will have a more formal time of listening as once again they lead one of our upcoming worship services.

That trip was on my mind as I began my preparations for this sermon. And it was easy for me to draw a connection between the youth mission trip and today’s gospel.

- We sent 23; Jesus sent 72.
- They all came back filled with stories to tell.

You don’t have to be around this congregation long to realize that “going” is part of our spiritual DNA. As we grow in our understanding of what it means to be a culture of discipleship, we have come to recognize that following Jesus is more than just sitting in a sanctuary and experiencing personal spiritual growth. Disciples don’t merely sit and absorb. Disciples are called to “go”:

- To go out from within these walls
- To go out from our comfort zones
- To go out to a world that needs Jesus and to carry the saving message of Jesus.

Over the years, our Grace youth have been sent to places like Chattanooga TN, Madison WI and Port Huron. Others in our church have been sent to places like Belize, the Philippines, Mexico, and several other South and Central American countries.

- Next Sunday you will hear a presentation and receive an invitation to join a group of people who are going to work in an orphanage in Malawi Africa.
- In October a similar invitation will be extended to go to Haiti.
- We are actively recruiting people right now to go back to the Laurel Mission in southeast KY. In fact there is an interest meeting about that trip on Tuesday evening at 6:30 p.m.

But lest you think that our commitment to “going” requires a passport, each month members of this congregation go to such places as the Springfield Soup Kitchen, St. John’s Food pantry, Jefferson Street garden, the Pregnancy Resource Clinic, Springfield Regional Medical Center and much, much more. The people of Grace are called to

Live a “Go To” Life

Why is that such a point of emphasis here? This text gives us four reasons.

#1: WE GO ... BECAUSE JESUS TOLD US TO GO

Did you ever ask your dad “why” he wanted you to do something? If your dad was like my dad, the answer was always the same:

Because I said so.

There is no need to belabor this point. We should need no other motivation beyond this one. The Scriptures are clear that “going” is the essential expectation for anyone who is a Christian:

Go and make disciples of all nations ... (Matthew 28:18)

Go! I am sending you out ... (Luke 10:3)

So, enough said about this reason. We move on...

#2: WE GO ... BECAUSE THE NEED IS GREAT

Look at verse 2:

The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. (Luke 10:2)

I have read that line in Scripture hundreds of times. I have preached on it dozens of times. But I realized something this week that had never clicked in my mind before. I don't know why I had never seen it. Maybe it was obvious to you.

When Jesus sends these 72 disciples out, He sends them into a field to harvest. Not to plant. Not to weed. Not to water. But to reap. The hard work of the gardening is already done! Jesus has already sown the seeds. He has weeded the weeds, and He has made it grow. That was an “aha” moment for me this week.

Greg Finke, author of *Joining Jesus on His Mission*, writes:

Only Jesus can do Jesus-work ... Our job is to watch for people who are ripe.
(Greg Finke, *Joining Jesus on His Mission*)

If that book title sounds familiar, it was the theme of our Adult Sunday School class in the summer of 2019.

Our grandson Gabriel has a garden at the Jefferson Street Garden. In days since it was planted one of us takes him to the garden and helps him weed and water it. Among other things, he is growing tomatoes. Right now there are little tiny tomatoes starting to appear.

- In terms of the visual imagery of our text, everything that has happened to this point in his garden is “Jesus-work.”
- One day soon it will be time to pick those tomatoes. That is the work of discipleship.

Many times we are reluctant to “go” because we confuse our work with the work of Jesus. The text is clear. The harvest is ready. The hard work is done. Now is the fun part.

#3: WE GO ... BECAUSE THE CONSEQUENCES ARE SERIOUS

Look at verse 16:

Whoever listens to you listens to me... (Luke 10:16)

When we go, people have an opportunity to respond to the call of Jesus on their lives. "Whoever listens ... listens to Jesus."

There is a verse of Scripture in Romans 10 that has always been important in my own call to be pastor.

But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? (Romans 10:14, NLT)

But it is not just a pastor verse. Every Christian is called to go. The Great Commission wasn't spoken to just the remaining 11 apostles on the day of Ascension. It was spoken to more than 120 disciples who also gathered on that mountainside. The implication is clearly that "going" is a job to everyone who follows Jesus, not just paid professionals.

Don't get so focused on who is supposed to go that you miss the consequence if no one DOES go. It is quite literally a matter of eternal life or death. People can't believe in Jesus unless they hear about Jesus; and they can't hear about Jesus unless someone goes to them.

When James wrote his epistle to the 12 tribes, he too stressed the potential consequences:

My dear friends, if you know people who have wandered off from God's truth, don't write them off. Go after them. Get them back and you will have rescued precious lives from destruction ... (James 5:19-20, The Message)

#4: WE GO ... BECAUSE THE JOY IS INCREDIBLE

The 72 went out into that harvest, sent by Jesus. What was the result?

The seventy-two returned **with joy** ... (Luke 10:17)

In a few weeks, our Gospel reading will be two of the three parables about lost things in Luke 15 (a lost sheep and a lost coin). Each parable ends with the same statement of joy.

In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." (Luke 15:10)

There is an old song written by Lanny Bryant. That reads like this:

At the completion of the Golden Gate,
no, the angels did not celebrate
and when the Wright boys flew their bird
no angelic shouts were heard.
There's only one thing that we're sure about
that's gonna make those angels jump and shout:
it's when a sinner makes the Lord his choice,
that's when the angels rejoice! *(Words and music by Lanny Bryant)*

If you like Southern Gospel Music, Google that one. The Gaither Vocal Band has a nice version.

As I pastor I get to be with you in the happy times and in the sad times. I stand with you when someone you love passes into eternity or when you get that scary diagnosis. And I also get to officiate at marriages in your family and I baptize your babies. But the greatest joy I have is when I see God do something in your life.

- Sometimes I get to see it before you do. God is good to me that way.
- But when you see it ... when you know it ... and you come to tell me about it, that's great stuff!

Do you want to rejoice? Ask someone this question: "how can I pray for you today?" And then do it! I guarantee a sense of exhilaration will come over you.

- I did that very thing this last week. As I was going through the drive through to get my morning Diet Coke, the lady who took my order was clearly not having a good day.
 - I asked, "Are you OK?"
 - "No, I'm in a lot of pain but I can't go home."
 - "Could I pray with you about that?"
 - "I'd like that."
 - And I did. And the grimace on her face turned to a smile – if only temporarily. And I felt pretty good too.

APPLICATION

Nowhere in the New Testament are the people of God called to invite people to church. Instead we are told to "go!" That approach was modeled clearly for us when Jesus was born:

For God so loved the world that He **sent** His only Son ... (John 3:16)

Going might well involve hours of driving or flying. It is far more likely it will involve opening your front door. You see, "going" means crossing the street to befriend a neighbor, hanging out by the drinking fountain at work in order to become better acquainted with a co-worker, sitting on a bleacher as you talk with another parent.

We are called to “go” to those places where we live, work and play. We are called to live “go to” life. Where will you go today?

Amen.