

March 26 Sermon

Communion Sunday

Who You Are

Main Point: Do you know who you are? In Christ, by faith, you are part of the most wonderful community that will ever exist. You have supernatural power to bring great good to the world. Therefore, you will be hated. But you are loved, and therefore, you are safe. You are loved, and therefore, you are safe to be sent. You are loved, and therefore, you are safe to be sent together into the world in order to show off the love of God.

SI: This is Jesus' Prayer for His disciples, and for us, His followers today. He is with the 12 for the last time before His crucifixion and resurrection. Jesus of course knows that He will be going to be with His Father in Heaven. He is praying to His Father on their behalf, on our behalf. He empowers us, equips us, enables us to be His hands and feet, His instruments, His ambassadors

Intro: What do you say when you are about to say something that you hope will have lasting impact? How do you end it? With prayer! You know that your words do not have power unless God uses them. Jesus in His perfect humanity shows us the essentialness of prayer – dependence upon the Father -

Prayer from the perfect Pray-er to the Father on behalf of the disciples, on behalf of us to show us here who we are and give us power to be who God makes us:

1The Called Out Ones

V. 17, 19 – “Sanctify them, set them apart, just as I set myself apart”

Ekklesia “The called out ones”

Therefore you are hated. And so Jesus prays for our protection b/c evil uses such hate to lead us to compromise the truth. In order to not be hated, in order to be liked, Christians are tempted to give away the truth of the Word.

We are called out and different, and sent in to make a difference.

You are set apart (sanctified) so that you can be sent (trans to 2)

2The Sent Ones

You are sent... v. 18, right between 17 & 19 >

Wherever you are, that is where you have been sent. To do what? To show off the love of God (v. 23) to a fallen / hurting world. And how do you do that?

How do you show off the love of God? Ah yes, now we're getting somewhere! Just tell me what I have to do! How do you show off/reveal the love of God? By experiencing the love of God for you / By receiving the love of God for you in the gift of His word, His setting you apart, and by placing you where He has. Then, the love of God pours out of you, oozes out of you – it has to, why else would you be sent? ...

What if it's not? What is stuck? Well, it could be that you are not really a Christian, that your life is still completely all about you. Examine yourself. That the real, deep reason you love people is b/c you want them to love you, and you are building your own report card based on how good of a person you are. Don't do that. Only Christ's perfect life is enough to earn the reward of Heaven. And by faith and repentance, His record is yours.

And for Christians, the love of God can get clogged up in you. You become just a sponge and not squeezing it out. And it could be that you are just resistant to being sent to wherever you are at this season in your life. That you don't love people, that you can't love people b/c you resent being where you are and you've fallen for the greener grass conspiracy. Sometimes this takes a while to get, to understand, to come to terms with... story of me being sent to **Monroeville**, and the 5 1/2 year mark...

What are you sent with? Only through the Word, only with the Word. Only hope is the Word. The government doesn't know what to do (Illus of Alton Hardy and **Urban Hope**) – such a strong relationship with the government of Fairfield b/c they realize they need help and don't know what to do.

Yes, and the church has the answer – the Word of God which has been given to us. Is it hard work? Is it slow? Of course! It should be!

Some of you know of the song “Heathens” by the band Twenty One Pilots.

Illus of “Heathens” – All my friends are heathens, take it slow. Wait for them to ask you who you know. Don't make any sudden moves, you don't know the half of the abuse.

You'll never know the psychopath sitting next to you

You'll never know the murderer sitting next to you, you'll have some weird people sitting next to you.

You'll think, "How'd I get here, sitting next to you?"

So yes, take it slow, just take it. Take the word with you into your world.

We are not of the world > we are different and recognizably so. Our values are not the world's values. Our allegiance is to another kingdom. Ambassadors. We are sent into the world. With the Word. Citizens of another country. It feels weird.

Some of you are too comfortable b/c you are not in the world enough. You want to protect yourselves. You want heaven on earth. Heaven has invaded and is taking over, but this is not Heaven. But you are still here, and you are sent to wherever you are.

The Called out ones, the sent ones, 3The United Ones

The Church is the Hope for the world b/c we have been given the Word and the love of God, so we should and must strive for unity. We make a vow to do this when we become church members. Jesus prays for this. We hold with all our might to the essential truth of the gospel, of orthodox Christianity, and we strive to maintain unity and peace within the boundaries of the truth.

Now why do we have 10,000 denominations? I don't know!

Why is this unity so important? So that the world may know! May know what? That you are awesome? That you are beautiful? That you should be praised and honored? Ha! That is the world's values! No, so that the world may know that Jesus is real and that you are loved. What does this mean?

Empowered by: You are Inoculated. (The mix of drugs to make the booster shot work, all in one vial.) You have been given these three things. The Word (v. 14, 20), The Prayers of Jesus (ch 17), and the Love of God (v. 23).

You are shot through with the love of God, you have been given His Word, the sword, and you are prayed for, you are tapped in to His power.

*What does this do? Fearlessness, riskiness, ruthlessness.

Fearlessness. > Let nothing move you. You are immovable (1 Cor 15:58)

Riskiness > Take risks to love people. And watch how God answers by giving you courage. Ask questions... Illus of friend with **atheist** friend... "So what do you think Christianity is?"

(Gentle) ... Do you have any non-Christian friends? Can you befriend heathens and just be their friend?

Ruthlessness > You know what you have, so you do everything to protect it and keep it. You are ruthless against sin in your own life b/c it feels like a **big log** in your eye to you.

You are ruthless to protect yourself and the church against evil – you don't allow yourself to indulge in anger or jealousy or lust or fear. Why? B/c these things bring disunity, so just don't do it.

But way more than that. You are ruthless against sin b/c you know who you are and what you have been given – perfect love drives out fear and enables your bold courage. Satan knows who you are so he does all he can to attack. But you are inoculated. You are immune. You are free from fear of death or harm.

“The flame will not hurt you, I only design your dross to consume and your gold to refine.”

Now you don't go and say, “bring it on,” but you do go out in confidence that the devil will flee from you b/c you wear the armor of God and you use the sword of truth.

*1 John 3:1 “See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.” !!

And as you experience that love, He will overflow His love out of you. Soak up His love and then squeeze it out to a hurting world.

Communion: He was sent for us, motivated by His love for us. He gave Himself for us. It is not mere remembrance, there is supernatural, mysterious but real power here. As you partake in faith, in belief, in desperation for the love of God to be in you and flow out of you, He answers through the means of grace, through the sacrament, this sacred, set apart meal for your soul, so that you experience His love so that it cannot help but overflow out of you. What if it's not? What if His love is stopped up, clogged up? What if you are having trouble believing, trouble loving people in your realm? Do you let the elements pass you by? No! You need them all the more. You tremble more, yes, you carry the weight of your stuckness, your inability, but that makes communion all the more glorious for you. He knows you're a sinner and stuck and not good at loving others so He died for you, took the punishment for your failures for you. He gives you Himself, b/c You need Him.

One of our problems is we have all seen and experienced so many well meaning but bad examples of evangelism! So many canned, sales pitches that are easy for the giver and hard on the receiver b/c they are not personalized.

One of the best tactics is from the world of secular music: Heathens! -- We don't want to take it slow, we want the fruit to always be ripe. We don't want to hear about their abuse. We don't want to enter in.

The Focus of evangelism is love for the other person, not getting the duty or the guilt off of you, not relief that you are obeying God. It is love.

Story of hearing Charlie Jones say this at avpc a couple of years ago. Freed me from guilt and the temptation to manipulation and salesmanship in evangelism.

Love is sacrifice, love is hard, love demands your vulnerability and willingness to be hurt by the person you love. Love hurts (song- Meatloaf?)

“The focus in evangelism is not to be whatever is easy for us, but the particular person to whom we are speaking.” – Jerram Barrs, Heart of Evangelism 182.

The goal is to be a servant to people, to serve them, to give them something. This requires great humility, vulnerability, weakness, the strength that to the worldly mind looks like weakness. A sponge squeezed out. Why would you do that? Don't you want to keep it all to yourself?

Illus of “leave it all on the field” in sports...

Illus of a sign of growth for me that I have gotten better at honking the horn. I used to be terrified of hurting anybody's feelings and eager to please, to be a people-pleaser. The Gospel must hurt before it can heal (to call people heathens, to call them murderers and psychopaths is to be real and honest and brutally so, so that it gets us out of the fog

of “they’re not that bad off”, to wake us up to caring). Now what do we do? How do we live in light of being in the world but not of the world?

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