

## Life as a Mission

John 20:21 So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! as the Father has sent Me, I also send you."

Sunday, December 13, 2020 at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

### Introduction: purpose in life

I remember, just a few days ago, watching part of a documentary about Hasidic Jews, who are fluent in Yiddish as well as English and live in certain parts of Brooklyn. A resident of the neighborhood was guiding the filmmaker down the street when all of a sudden, a young man steps out of a storefront, looks straight into the camera and says, "We all have a purpose in life. We're all on a divine mission," and then walks away. It startled me because it touches on our subject for today, that life is a mission. For some that is obvious, like missionaries, etc. For others it may not be so obvious and we hope to ponder what the Lord Jesus meant when He said what He said.

### Set the stage

In the evening of the day of Christ's Resurrection, the disciples were under lock and key because they feared the authorities would try to do to them what they did to Jesus, and yet Jesus entered the room and stood in their midst and gave them His blessing. He showed them His hands and His side, and then said, "Peace be unto you. As the Father has sent Me, so I send you."

### The Father sent Jesus

The choice of words is interesting, because the grammar indicates that the Father has "sent" Jesus in the perfect tense. In other words, Jesus is still being sent by the Father even after His Resurrection. It is as if His condition as "being sent" is without end. He has been sent for us, and is still on mission for us.

### Jesus sends us

Yet when we read this text, everybody notices that He speaks to disciples. Was it the remaining ten disciples (Thomas wasn't there) or were there some others? When Jesus commissioned these people, did He send them only or does this apply to others as well? Some people had a commission that was specific to them. Mary, the mother of Jesus, had a mission in life that applied only to her and never to anyone else. When Moses was called by God to free his people from Egypt, he got Aaron as an assistant, but the calling was still his. So when Jesus told these people that as the Father had sent Him, so He send them, as it applicable to them alone, or to others, including us?

There is an episode in which Jesus delivers a man from severe possession by evil spirits, casting the spirits into a large herd of swine who then promptly rushed into the sea and drowned. That man wanted to join Jesus and His disciples, but Jesus told him to return to his village and tell people what happened to him. So he was sent of a mission of sorts as well. (Matthew 8:28-34)

While this passage may leave us with some questions, there is another that clarifies. Just before His Ascension, Jesus gives the Great Commission, which is widely held to apply to the whole church around the world, throughout the ages. "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20) If I read 1 Corinthians 15:6 correctly, Jesus may very well have said this to over 500 people at once, not just the remaining eleven apostles. Years later, the Apostle Paul gave these instructions to his student, Timothy, that can apply to all of us. He wrote, "And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." (2 Timothy 2:2)

#### Application: Know It Well Enough to Teach It

There's at least a couple of applications to this instruction. First, the young student, Timothy, is told to share what he has learned to trustworthy people who can then teach others. This begs the question, do we know what we believe about Christ and the Bible well enough to teach it to others effectively? Considering the we may all very well be on a divine mission it would be good to know well what we believe, and to pray.

#### Conclusion

It looks like the young man in the Jewish neighborhood was correct in that we all are on a divine mission. Some people may have callings on their lives that are specific to them, like Moses and Mary the mother of Jesus. Some are called to their own people and home, like the man delivered from evil spirits. Everyone is called to make disciples and to know what we believe well enough to teach to others that they can trust to share with still others. In that way, and others, all our lives are a mission.