

Pastor J.D. Greear
A Multiplying Movement

March 5, 2023
John 20:21-22

Good morning, Two Cities. I cannot tell you how incredible it is for me to be standing here looking at you. Pastor Kyle did not tell you the full truth in that little video introduction. The truth is I've actually been begging him to let me preach at your church for years. You guys planted six and a half to seven years ago. It kind of started with a bang, and all of these people showed up and started to come to Christ. It was like a revival.

I was like, "Man, Kyle, this is amazing. Let me come and preach here." He was like, "J.D., all due respect, but I don't think you're ready for what's happening at Two Cities." It was a little weird, because we planted him out, but I was like, "All right." A couple of years after that, I wrote a book called *Just Ask*. It was a book about revival. I thought, "Oh, okay. Now I've written something about the kinds of things he's experiencing." I sent him a copy of the book.

The next time I saw him at one of our events, I was like, "Hey, let me come and talk about prayer and the events of that book." He was like, "Man, I read the book, and I don't think you're ready to preach at Two Cities yet." At this point, I didn't know whether to be offended or what. I got elected president of the Southern Baptist Convention two years after that. I was like, "Now he has to let me come." So I called him up. He was like, "Man, I've been listening to you and your church. I feel like you're not ready."

At that point, y'all, I was totally bewildered. I was like, "Man, I don't understand. We planted you. I've written a book I think would be relevant. I'm serving in these roles. I just want to come and see, man. I'll come for free. I'll pay my own way." He said, "Now. Now you are ready to come and preach at Two Cities." That's what it took. So, here I am, and you're going to get what you paid for.

On a serious note, I will tell you, it is very, very meaningful for me to be able to stand here. I've certainly heard from Pastor Kyle and Donovan and others about what is going on here. Now, you guys know Pastor Kyle loves you guys, right? He loves you to

the point of annoying, bragging exaggeration, I think. I've told him several times, "Look. If half of the things you're saying about Two Cities is true, then that's the greatest church on earth." He loves you genuinely, and he believes those things.

There are many, many things I could commend about his leadership here. You know many of them. The thing that makes a leader a leader, and a leader who is the kind who sees what you guys have seen here, is when he and Margy genuinely love this church, and he loves you. The way he talks about you... I'm like, "Kyle, I grew up in Winston-Salem. I know what people are like in Winston-Salem."

He believes God is doing something here, and he is. It's hard sometimes to see it when you're in the middle of it, but I want you to know there is really something special that is happening here. What a joy for us to be able to watch from a couple of cities over and rejoice in what God is doing.

What I want to talk about this morning actually relates very closely to that, because we learned, as a church, about 15 years ago that the way we were going to impact the world was not going to be through growing a large congregation in Raleigh. The way we were going to impact the world was going to be to raise up leaders like Kyle and Donovan and the Taylors and some of the other incredible people who have come out of our church to be a part of what is going on here.

We began to use phrases around our church like, "We send out our best" or "We judge our success not by our seating capacity but by our sending capacity." That has led us to get behind people like Kyle, to recognize God's hand on them and just say, "Let's celebrate what God is doing there."

What I want to talk to you about is how you are supposed to personally be a part of that. You may or may not ever leave to go on a church plant. You may or may not ever leave to go serve overseas, but I want you to not just be an observer in this, but to be a part of a movement where you have as much ownership in it and as much stake in it, because you understand your role in it, the same way Kyle and the leadership team here does.

So, if you have your Bibles this morning, open them up, or turn them on, I guess, to John, chapter 20. I grew up in church not far from here, just actually a couple of miles up your road...Salem Baptist Church, as he mentioned. My pastor there used to always say... Dr. E.C. Sheehan was my first pastor.

He used to always say the sweetest sound he got to hear in the morning was the ruffling of the pages as people opened their Bibles. Listen. As a pastor of a church full of Millennials and Gen Z-ers, I never get to hear that sound. I get to see the warm

glow of God's Word on their faces. I'll take it. Whatever you've got. Don't play games on your phone, but get it out.

The late Rodney Stark (he's one of our generation's most significant church historians) points out that by the end of the first century, there were a grand total of about 7,530 Christians, which is an oddly specific number if you ask me. At the end of the first century, after all of the apostles are dead, the total number is 7,530. Even if he's off by 1,000 on either side, we're still talking less than 10,000.

The church I pastor in Raleigh is not the biggest church in North Carolina, and there are going to be more there in that one church than there were in the entire world at the end of the first century. Yet, Rodney Stark points out, by the time you get to AD 312... We know, by that point, over half of the Roman Empire, millions and millions and millions of people, half of the so-called civilized world, now confesses Christ.

He says, "How do you do that?" How did that church go from that small amount of people, 7,500 people, to a point where it's millions and millions and over half are identifying... He said, especially when you consider they didn't have a single one of the things we think are necessary to grow a church today.

They didn't have any money. They didn't have any buildings. They didn't have any property. They didn't have any influential people in the Senate. They didn't have printing presses. They didn't have a building to organize conferences. He said, "How did they do it?"

Rodney Starks points out that one of the things they *did* have that we *don't* have... Not that those other things are bad. He says they had the power of multiplication at work within them. Every believer understood they were the ones responsible to multiply the Great Commission, and every church understood it was responsible to multiply itself.

Rodney Stark points out that conviction, that power of multiplication, came from one of the last conversations Jesus had with his disciples before he ascended into heaven, the one I have open in front of you right now, John 20, after the resurrection. It's just a couple of verses.

Look at verse 21. Jesus says to these disciples after he's resurrected, "***As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.***" There's so much in those two phrases. Every time I read it I get overwhelmed with the weight of it. Verse 22: "***And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'***"

Y'all, that statement, "As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you," is an extremely significant statement in the gospel of John because Jesus' primary identity

in the gospel of John is the "sent one." He is called that more than 60 different times in the gospel of John. The primary designation for God the Father in the gospel of John is the "Father who sent me." That's Jesus' primary identity.

Now, in one of the final conversations he has with these disciples, he bestows that identity, his identity, his main identity when he was here... He bestows that on his followers, to *all* of his followers. That means everything else we're going to do, as followers of Jesus, everything else we do in the kingdom of God is going to flow out of that baseline identity.

By the way, John is not the only one who heard it this way. In Luke's account of the Great Commission, here's how he records Jesus saying it. Different conversation, but the same general thrust. Acts 1:8. He says to these disciples right before he ascends to heaven, "***But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.***"

Think about all of the different identities he could have put in that blank. They would have all been true. "You're going to be my worshipers," because that's the most important thing in the Christian life. "You're going to be my Bible studiers. You're going to be my prayer warriors. You're going to be my social justice advocates." All of those would have been fine.

He could have chosen any of them to put there, but the one he chose in the last conversation was *witnesses*. "Sent one." That's your primary identity. That means whatever else you do, whatever else you're called to, whatever else you're engaged in, whatever else your profession is, your identity that you live out of is "sent one."

I remember hearing this famous true story about Albert Einstein. When he was in his old age, he began to have some senility problems. He lived up in New Jersey. He used to take the train from there back and forth to New York. In his old age, he gets on the train, and he's headed up. The conductor comes through, you know, where they're getting the tickets.

Einstein stands up, and he's feeling around his pocket for his ticket. He's checking all of his pockets. He gets this panicked look on his face. The young man conductor eventually, after watching him for 30 seconds, says, "Dr. Einstein, don't worry about it. I know who you are." Einstein responds, "Young man, I know who I am. I just cannot remember where I'm going."

I think a lot of Christians would be the opposite. They feel like they know where they're going; they just don't remember who they are. That affects how they understand how they're going. Jesus' identity he puts on them is "sent one." "You are

the ones who are sent." The conviction the early church held that made them so successful was that every believer was sent.

At The Summit Church, we often talk about the myth of calling. The myth of calling is that calling is a sacred privilege that is reserved for a select few super-Christians in the body of Christ that is conveyed through a mystical experience. We call it the *Cheerios myth* of discerning the will of God.

The idea is if God is going to call you into something significant, if he wants to use you, then he appears to you in your Cheerios, so to speak. He just spells out "missionary" or "pastor" or something like that. I'm just going to go ahead and tell you. I've stared at my Cheerios for years. All it has ever spelled out was "Ooo" over and over again. That is a myth.

Let me be clear. If God spells out something in your Cheerios, by all means you should pay attention to it, but the myth is that God only calls a few of us *that way*, and the rest of us, if he hasn't done that, then what he wants from you is to be a good person, be involved in church, pay attention, and pay your tithes. That's the myth.

The truth is you're called, because the calling to leverage your life for the Great Commission was included in the call to follow Jesus. They're not two different calls. Jesus said in Matthew 4:19, "Follow me..." That's salvation. "...and I will make you a fisher of men." That's mission. Which means when you accepted Jesus, you accepted the call to mission.

The question is no longer if you're called; the question now is merely where and how it is. That is your identity. The myth is that it's only for a handful of us. There are four components to being sent that are tucked into those verses. In fact, there are about 40, but I'm only going to pull out four of them. Four things that, if you believe these things, will make you fulfill this identity. Four things you believe coming out of these verses.

01 SENT PEOPLE RECOGNIZE GOD IS ALWAYS AT WORK AROUND THEM

Now why do I say that? Here's why I say that: "***As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.***" It means the way Jesus was sent, you are sent. Jesus talks about how he was sent earlier in the gospel of John, so we have to jump back there and see what he meant by that. I want you to listen to how Jesus explains himself being sent.

John 5:17: "***My Father is working until now, and I am working*** [alongside of him]." "I can only do what I've previously seen the Father doing." In other words, Jesus said,

"My being sent is a recognition that God is always at work around me. I'm looking for where he is at work, and I am joining him in that."

Years ago, back when I was in college (so, six or seven years ago), I did a Bible study. It profoundly changed my view of ministry. Some of you have done it. Especially if you're a seasoned Christian, you remember this. It was by a guy named Henry Blackaby. It was called *Experiencing God*.

The whole point of this Bible study was success in ministry is not coming up with great ideas for God and finding great leaders to lead those ideas. Success in ministry is figuring out where God is at work and joining him in it. From cover to cover in your Bible, God is always the one taking the initiative, and the church's responsibility is merely to respond.

He said you have to get rid of this idea that there's talent and leadership capacity and that's what God wants. You have to get rid of this idea that the way you're going to be a successful parent is to read all of the great parenting books there are, and then just mastering that so you can shape your kid. All successful parenting and successful ministry are is figuring out where God is at work and joining him in it.

I told Pastor Kyle last night it's like Kathy Keller, wife of Tim Keller, pastor up in Manhattan, says. She basically says, "Do you want to know how to start a successful church? It's easy. Find out where God is sending a revival, and move there the month before." That's what success is. It's just figuring out where God is at work. What that tells you, friend, is that God is always at work around you. That's what Jesus understood.

The Father is working. He has been. He is now. He is at work in the lives of your friends and your kids and your city and your neighborhood. Your job, my job, is to figure out where that is and step into the stream of that power. That's what successful ministry and successful parenting is, like I said. If there's anything that has convinced me of this one principle, it's not ministry, it's parenting.

I have four teenagers now, all living in my house. I call them my *North Koreans* because they're smart enough to make nuclear bombs now, just not mature enough to handle them. My whole thing is, like, "God, if there has ever been one forum where I'm like I don't have the capacity to shape them and to form spiritual fruit in them..." God is the one who does that.

So, in the morning, I don't get up overwhelmed as a parent. I get up and say, "God, what are you going to do with these little heathens today, and how do you want to use me as a part of this as I'm walking alongside of them? Because you're the one

writing their story. You're at work in their lives, and I just want to join you in what you're doing."

02 SENT PEOPLE HAVE A RICH THEOLOGY OF PLACE

Theology of place. That might be a new term for you. All it means is that you understand that wherever you are, God sent you there. Being sent does not always mean going somewhere else. Sometimes it does. Sometimes it means going on the church plant, moving overseas, but a lot of times, what it means is recognizing that the place where God has you... He wants you to live sent *there*. Living sent is not just for those people who leave this place.

In Acts 17, the apostle Paul says God determined the allotted periods and the boundaries of the nations' dwelling places. He determined where the nations are. Why did he do that? Why does he control borders? Why does he control refugee movements? Why does he control world politics? Paul says, "...that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him."

In other words, Paul says, God has sovereignly directed the placement of nations for the purpose of these nations hearing the gospel. Paul here is talking about whole nations, but wouldn't it stand to reason that if God does that with whole nations, he does that with individuals too? That God has been in charge of shaping your personal borders, what neighborhoods you live in, what cubicle you sit in, what hall you're living on in your college, who you sit next to on a plane.

You understand God is the one... He's saying, "I'm controlling all of these borders. I've got you there for a reason, and I want you to turn your radar on because you were sent there." I recently read a book actually called *Sent*. The authors of this book work with a ministry called *Cru*, which is a ministry that works on college campuses. I'm sure you have some represented right here in your church.

They started this national campaign. I love it. The whole campaign is just one question...*What do you see?* What needs do you see out there? What's in front of you? Who is there? It's the idea that the Father is always at work around you. What do you see? Open your eyes.

If you can remember one thing leaving here this morning, remember this: God has determined your place. Where you're living right now is not an accident. Even random encounters... Some people are always asking and watching for that. In 2 Corinthians 2:14, Paul says God put us in this place to be an aroma of Christ.

I'm just here to smell up the place for Jesus, in a good way. What happens is sometimes God just opens up somebody's nose. They pick that up, and that draws them, like being drawn to a kitchen where there's baked bread being made. You have to walk toward it. He's saying that's what we are, and God draws people toward us.

About six months ago, I was standing in my kitchen. There was a young lady standing there. She was the leader of my daughter's small group, my senior in high school's small group leader. I introduced myself to her. She got this little coy smile on her face. She said, "We've actually met before." She says, "You won't remember this, I'm sure. About two years ago, though, we both had a 6:00 a.m. flight leaving from the RDU airport, flying to Atlanta."

She said, "So, we're there at 5:10 in the morning waiting to get on the plane." She said, "You walked in and noticed I was reading a book by..." I think it was Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*. "You just stopped and looked at me and said, 'That is a really deep book to read this early in the morning.' I looked up and was like, 'This is a strange conversation to have at 5:10 in the morning.' I said, 'Yeah.'"

She said, "Then you just stopped and said, 'Are you trying to find God?' I said, 'Well, sort of,' and I stumbled out a few things that are appropriate for 5:00 in the morning. You just stood right there, and you began to share your story of how you had gone through a similar search and how Jesus revealed himself to you and how Jesus had changed your life."

She said, "I thought it was a little weird, but that's kind of all I thought about. That was the end of it." By the way, when she said that, I remembered that conversation. I remember seeing it and feeling like the Holy Spirit was saying, "You need to ask that girl a question." So I did. I never tell these people I'm a pastor, by the way, because that's a huge liability in a conversation like that.

She said, "So, we get on the plane. To my dismay, when I sit down, I realize I don't have my headphones, which is the one thing I wanted on a 6:00 a.m. flight." Amen? "I just wanted my headphones. You were sitting two rows ahead of me, and somehow, you got into the exact same conversation with the guy next to you on the plane. I don't know if you know this, but you don't really have an inside voice."

She said, "At this point, the entire economy comfort section... We're all listening to this story. For the next 45 minutes, you're explaining who Jesus is and how he came into your life, and all this stuff." She said, "I did not ask for this. I was annoyed by this, but I had literally nowhere else I could go but sit here and listen to this."

She said, "We got off the plane. All I'm thinking at this point is I just want to get to the Atlanta Bread Company at the other end of Terminal A, and I just want to get my

bagel and get on with my day. I'm still half asleep. I'm stumbling through. I stand in line, and I hear this voice. I look up. It's you. I was like, 'What is wrong? I am being punished by the Lord or something.'"

She said, "I look up there, and you're standing there, and there's a mom in front of you who has two kids. She's obviously having a rough day, and she can't find her money. You just said, 'Hey, don't worry about it.' You told the lady, 'I'll take care of this, and I'll take care of mine.'"

She said, "I didn't say anything, but I thought, 'Well, this guy doesn't have much social graces. He doesn't know how to use an inside voice in the morning, but at least he's not a jerk.'" She said, "That was the end of it. Fast-forward six months. I'm a nurse at Duke. I start a friendship. Somebody starts sharing Christ with me there and offers to study the Bible with me."

She says, "About three Bible studies in, I'm like, 'Hey, this random guy I met in the airport said a lot of the same things.' So, this girl keeps trying to get me to come to her church. 'Come to my church with me. Come to my church.'" She says, "We go in and sit down. The little video goes off." She said, "You walked out on the stage, and I was like, 'Oh my gosh!' It was you."

She said, "Now fast-forward another six months. I've been coming every single week, and I know I need to receive Christ. I pray to receive Christ, I get baptized, and now I'm your daughter's small group leader." The first time I hear about any of this, she is standing in my living room.

All that is is an awareness that God is at work around you, and then putting your radar screen on, and somebody else at Duke doing the same thing, because God is the one who is writing those stories. That's all it is. I know some of you hear that and are like, "I could never strike up a conversation with a stranger in an airport who's reading an atheist book."

Listen. All I'm doing is asking questions. That's all it is. It's just an awareness that God is at work. In fact (this is a different message for a different time), I actually jotted down a couple of the questions. Some of you are going to be like, "How do I actually do this?"

A lot of times, when people share with me something that's a struggle, I'll just be like, "Hey, that really sounds like there are spiritual dimensions to this for you. Do you feel like you're on a spiritual journey?" I feel so cheesy when I say that, but they're like, "Yeah, I do." "Tell me about that."

My favorite one, though, is "I've recently experienced a renewal in my prayer life. Is there anything I can pray for you about?" Now, whenever I'm talking to an atheist, an atheist always responds with two things. They say, first, "I don't believe in prayer or God." Second, "Here are my requests," and then they give me their requests.

The point is I know God is at work around me, so I'm constantly running a metal detector over the sand and saying, "God, where is it? I want to join you in it." Or to use a more biblical analogy, I'm a fisher of men. A good fisherman always has his line in the water, because you never know when God is going to send the big one under your boat. That's all being sent is: living with the awareness that God is at work around you, knowing he has determined your personal borders. So open your eyes.

Before I go on to this third one, let me just say one other application here. God is doing that with this church and this city also. You're not in Winston-Salem on accident. You're not here because this is a good demographic set for building a church. You are here because God decided he wanted to reach the city, and he needed a church to do it.

You didn't start the movement of God in this city. It didn't start with you. It won't stop with you. You are the reflection of it, and you have to discern where God is at work. Years ago, I met with the mayor of our city. This was about 12 years ago. I was like, "Hey, we feel like we're kind of guests in this city. We feel like, if anything, we're this host culture trying to draw people out of the city up into the church."

I was like, "Our church wants to be a blessing to this city. We want your problems to be our problems." So I said, "Mr. Mayor, will you tell me the five worst things..." At that point we were in Durham. "The five most broken things in Durham." He just rattled off, "The homeless, the orphan, the prisoner, the unwed mother, and high school dropout."

I wrote them down, and I went back and told our church. I said, "Y'all, I don't have any plans, any ideas for any of these, but can we just, as a church, begin to dream about what ministry looks like in those areas? I don't have any programs I can offer you, but will you open your eyes to where God might be at work in and around you in those things? Let's just bring those ideas to me, and then let's see what develops out of that."

I could spend the next five sermons telling you story after story of how this has come, not from me, but come from people in the congregation. I remember one of the first ones was... There was a little elementary school that was 18 months away from being shut down in downtown Durham because it was the worst-ranking school in the entire Orange/Durham/Wake...all of it. It was terrible.

So, we got involved there and just met with the principal and said, "What can we do to be a blessing here?" Our people got involved tutoring kids and sponsoring classrooms and even doing some sneaky prayer walks around it from time to time. We did a joint Christmas program with them...all of these programs.

To make a long story short, over four years, that school went from being the lowest-ranked school in Durham County to being the highest-ranked school in Durham County. They did an article about it in the *Durham Herald Sun*, which is not a Christian newspaper. I'm going to quote it to you. They interviewed the principal about the incredible turnaround.

She's a great leader. I don't want to take any respect from her. Here's what she said in the *Durham Herald Sun*: "Yes, a lot of people get the credit for this turnaround, but I've got to start where it started, and that is by thanking God and the people of The Summit Church who poured out his kindness to us and made all of this possible."

I just had a couple tell me in our church that they went into the foster care system. They came to that last interview with the social services worker, and the social services worker was like, "Why do you want to do this?" The guy said, "Well, since you asked, at our church we believe that Jesus..." The social worker literally cut them off and said, "Are you about to tell me about The Summit Church and the gospel, and that's what moved you into this?"

The guy was like, "Yeah." She said, "I cannot tell you how many times somebody has sat in that seat and said that very thing." She said, "We all know here in Wake and Durham Counties that we can all go back, and we can actually chart the day Summit Church got involved in ministering to the foster community here."

In fact, they just recently told us COVID actually knocked that whole thing off. There are 500 new foster placement needs we have in that. That's the broken part of our city, and we say, "That's our problem. That's not our city's problem." Open your eyes to where God might be at work around you, because that's what it means to live sent. It's just to join him in what he is doing.

One of my favorite stories on this... I got a call shortly after all this happened from the mayor's office again. It was his assistant this time. His assistant said, "Hey, the mayor wants you to come and speak at the city's annual Martin Luther King Jr. rally." Now, all cities in the South are racially divided, but Durham is especially. We have a lot of issues.

So, I was like, "Did you mean to call me?" She said, "Yes." Because I'm not the typical speaker for the Martin Luther King Jr. rally. It's a big deal in Durham. It's televised. All of the city and county government officials are there. So I'm like, "Me?" She said,

"Yes." I was like, "What does he want me to talk about?" She said, "I don't know." I said, "Well, how long do I have to talk?" She said, "Twenty minutes."

"What can I say?" She said, "I don't care what you say. He doesn't care what you say. Just don't be controversial." I said, "Well, listen, ma'am. If you give me 20 minutes and a mic and a camera, I'm going to talk about Jesus." She said, "Yeah, I don't think he's controversial." I said, "I just don't think you and I see him the same way." She said, "Look. Whatever. Do you want to do this or not?" I said, "Yes."

I was telling Kyle this last night. I typically don't get nervous anymore talking in front of crowds. If you do it enough, you forget about it. I was nervous. I mean, we're talking, like, Joel Osteen about to preach at The Gospel Coalition nervous. That's how I felt. I was back there like... The county manager came up to me and was like, "You look really nervous." I was like, "I am really nervous." He had been to our church a few times, and he knew what the normal me was like.

He said, "Why are you nervous?" I said, "Because I don't know why I'm here. Nobody has told me why I'm here." He said, "Here's why you're here." He said, "In our city council meeting, we were discussing all of the different things in our city that are broken, and somebody who doesn't go to your church made the observation that everywhere in our city there's something that's broken, there's somebody there from The Summit Church who is trying to fix it."

He said, "I'm not even saying y'all are doing a great job. Sometimes y'all are just in the way, but you're there. We thought that's the kind of spirit we wanted to see celebrated on Martin Luther King Jr. Day." So, yes, I stood up there, and of course, I gave the respect Martin Luther King Jr. was due, and then I used 15 of my 20 minutes just to talk about a Savior who came to earth from heaven and emptied himself so you and I could be alive.

It's just coming from a church that is looking around, saying, "Where's God at work around me? I want to join him in it. Where is God at work in this city?" That's what it means for you to live sent here.

03 SENT PEOPLE LISTEN FOR THE PROMPTING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

If being sent means joining God where he's at work around you, a really important skill to develop is the ability to discern where the Spirit is at work. You can see that right there in that passage. It's in the second verse, verse 22, right after Jesus says, "As the Father sent me, I'm sending you."

"And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'" Now, to be honest, that's a little weird. That wasn't a common Hebrew greeting. It's not a Christian greeting, if you're new to church. When I saw Kyle yesterday, I didn't say, "Hey, Kyle" and blow in his face or anything. It wasn't common back then either.

It was a foretaste of Pentecost. He wasn't officially giving them the Holy Spirit. He was giving them an appetizer, because he was wanting to reinforce with them in this conversation that the only possible way they were going to be able to do any of this was to be able to do it with the Holy Spirit.

He was saying, "Don't go out and try to do this stuff. Don't be sent on your own. Don't come up with good ideas. I need you to follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit." Jesus said the Holy Spirit's presence with us in ministry would be more valuable than if we could have Jesus himself staying to lead our ministry efforts himself.

This is another overlooked verse in John that's really important in being sent. John 16:7: **"Nevertheless, I tell you the truth..."** Jesus was not in the habit of telling lies. He didn't have to stop and clarify, "Okay. Now I'm being serious." Whenever he gives a little phrase like that, it's because what he's about to say is so mind-blowing that if you don't actively pay attention to it, it'll go right over your head. I promise you, for 98.9 percent of you, this is going right over your head.

Look at what he says. **"...it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper [the Holy Spirit] will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you."** "It is to your advantage that I leave." Y'all, how absurd must that have sounded to these first disciples? "To my advantage?"

What would it be like to have Jesus as your ministry companion? How awesome is *that* experience? You go out for a tough day in ministry, a mission trip. You have some theological questions about Calvinism. You come home. *Bam!* Jesus answers them perfectly. You're at a small group. You run out of Chex Mix. *Bam!* Jesus multiplies the Chex Mix so there are 12 baskets left over.

Your dog dies, and you loved your dog. *Bam!* Jesus raises your dog back from the dead. Your cat dies. Jesus digs a hole to help bury that cat and get rid of it forever. Amen? All right. That may not be exactly what it's like, but the point is... You get it, right? It would have been awesome. Now he's telling you, "If you knew what you were being offered in the Holy Spirit, you'd be glad I was leaving."

I'm still having trouble getting there. I mean, imagine I stood up here and was like, "Hey, the real reason I'm here is Kyle is resigning." You're mortified. I mean, he's your pastor. You love him. "No, no, no. Don't be sad, because we already have a new

candidate for Two Cities Church. It's Jesus of Nazareth. He's going to come and preach here next week. He's going to start a series called the *Sermon on the Mount*. You're going to want to bring your friends."

I'm thinking all of you are going to be like, "We love Kyle, but forget Kyle. We got Jesus." You'd be excited. You'd be calling everybody. Here's a question: Are you as excited this morning that you're walking out of here with the Holy Spirit inside of you and that you're a part of a group of people who have the Holy Spirit inside of them? If you're not as excited or more excited at *that* than you would be with Jesus being here next week, then you don't understand John 16:7.

John 16:7 tells you it is to your advantage to have the Holy Spirit, because at that point, it's no longer about ability; it's just about availability to the Holy Spirit. That means you have to discern the ability to listen to his voice. I know that's the million-dollar question. Like, "How do I know when he's speaking to me?" That is a different sermon series for a different day. You should bug Kyle to preach that message series to you. How do you know what the Holy Spirit's voice sounds like?

Here's what's frustrating to me. The Holy Spirit shows up in the book of Acts 59 times. You can count them. Of the 59 times the Holy Spirit shows up, in 36 of them he is speaking. Now I get it. Things are different now. They were apostles. They were writing the Bible. I understand that. But, y'all, you cannot convince me that the only book we have that tells us stories about what it looks like to walk with the Spirit...

You can't convince me it's filled with a bunch of stories of people whose experiences have nothing in common with us. How would that be possible? In fact, John Newton, the Puritan, used to say something like, "How is it that what was so essential in the first century would become irrelevant in ours?"

What's frustrating to me is of the 36 times, it never tells us exactly *how* he speaks. It just says he spoke. Acts 13:2: "The Holy Spirit said, 'Separate Barnabas and Paul for ministry.'" I'm like, "Ooh, that's awesome. Well, how did he say it? Did it appear on the screen? Did he write it on the wall? Did everybody think the same thought at once? Did they have a little dialogue bubble pop up above their head? Was that the sign that he was..." How do you know? It doesn't tell us.

Y'all, I have to think the ambiguity is intentional, because more havoc has been wreaked in the world following the words God just said than any other phrase. So, I think there was always supposed to be a humility about hearing from the Holy Spirit. The point is while there is ambiguity in *how* the Holy Spirit speaks, there is no ambiguity in *that* he speaks.

If you're going to be a church, if you're going to be a person who lives sent, you have to discern his voice. The entire history of the book of Acts is not great leaders doing great things for God; it's just people who are showing up, saying, "Lord, here am I. Send me."

It's Philip, a layman, in Acts 8, who obeys the Holy Spirit to go up in the middle of nowhere, and along comes a guy we now call the *Ethiopian eunuch*. Philip was in the right place at the right time, obeying the Holy Spirit. He shared Christ with him. According to Eusebius, the church historian, that Ethiopian eunuch went home to Sub-Saharan Africa where he was from and not only started a church but a church-planting movement that is in existence today.

Do you realize that's the first international mission trip in the Bible, at least in the New Testament? And it didn't come from the apostles planning. It didn't come from some rich person funding the trip. It just came from somebody saying, "Yes" to the Holy Spirit. You have to learn to listen to what he says.

04 SENT PEOPLE SEE ALL OF LIFE AS A RESPONSE TO JESUS

"As the Father has sent me, that's how I'm sending you." Just as Jesus was sent for you, so now you are sent for others. Here's the question...*Where would you be without Jesus had Jesus not been sent for you?* I could give you at least one answer to that. You'd be at the exact same place that millions of people are in the world without *you*. You see, the preaching of the gospel is an essential part of the completion of the gospel.

It's like Martin Luther used to say. It wouldn't matter if Jesus died a thousand times if nobody ever heard about it. Millions of people around the world and tens of thousands of people in this city are in the exact same place you would have been had Jesus not been sent for you. So, Jesus says, "As the Father has sent me, now I'm sending you." Somebody who's sent says, "I'm going to be for other people what Jesus was for me."

When I was growing up, my mom and dad... I grew up right here in Winston-Salem. My mom and dad used to always tell me the story of C.T. Studd. Is that name familiar to you? If you've been around church for a while... He was one of the most famous missionaries of the nineteenth century.

The name doesn't mean much to you now, but he was like the greatest athlete at the turn of the twentieth century...cricket. I know, kind of a lame sport, but back then it

was the rage. He was the LeBron James of cricket. If you're going to be a professional athlete, Studd... I mean, that's a great name.

C.T. Studd, at the height of his career, resigns and says, "I'm giving my life to take the gospel to China, and then India," where he would one day die. Just imagine if LeBron James did that today. It was *that* kind of sensation back then. Everybody asked him, "Why on earth would you do that?"

He was in hundreds of interviews, and he developed this little phrase that I love. You might have heard it. "If Jesus be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for him." If this is what Jesus gave up to come get me, how dare I withhold what I have to take him to others?

Living sent is costly. It means you have uncomfortable conversations. It means sometimes you change vacation plans. Sometimes you change retirement plans. It means sometimes you change life savings plans. It means a whole reordering of your priorities. There's only one motivation that'll actually push you all the way to do that, and that is when you understand what Jesus did for you that you're being now asked to do for others.

The question you have to ask yourself is...*Do you actually, really, totally believe this gospel?* I know you *say* you believe it, but do you actually believe it? The two words used in John more often than any others are the words *believe* and *sent*. *Believe* is used 99 times; *sent* is used 60-something times.

The reason those are the two repetitive words in John is because you can't be one without the other. If you're not feeling sent, you don't actually believe. Right? I mean, I'm not trying to be mean about it. I was sharing Christ one time with a girl named Rhonda. She was from the Northeast. She had grown up in America. She had heard of Jesus, but she had never heard the gospel.

As I'm explaining the gospel to her, she has all of these questions, and we're going back and forth. Rhonda says to me, "You actually believe this." I said, "Well, yeah." "You believe this Jesus died on a cross and that makes a difference in heaven and hell for every person." I said, "Yes, I believe that." She said, "Because you don't act like you believe it."

I said, "What do you mean? I'm standing here telling you about it." She said, "No, no. You are standing here trying to win a debate with me. You're trying to score points." She said, "If I believed what you say you believe, I'm not sure how I'd make it through the day." She said, "I'm not sure how I wouldn't burst into tears every single time I saw a friend who didn't know Christ. I know for sure I would not be able to rest until

every person who I knew and loved had had a chance to hear and respond to the gospel."

I knew what she was saying was exactly right. A lot of us who say we believe the gospel... There's no possible way we actually do if there are people in our lives who we love and call our friends who have not heard this message from us. To believe is to be sent, and sent people see all of their lives as a response to Jesus.

Two Cities, you're sent here. That's not what Kyle's thing is, not what Donovan's thing is. It's not just for a handful of families. You are sent here, and you need to be a part of this movement, because these are the glory days of the church. God is moving again in his church, and you can see it. You are a part of it. I don't want you to take any of it for granted. I don't want you to get left behind.

You are not an observer in this; you are a participant. That's why God makes churches succeed: so they can be sent. God did not make The Summit Church blow up so we could have big church and a big platform and really work on my ego. A few weeks ago, I was preaching a vision sermon, and somebody came up afterward and said, "Pastor, you're not just a good preacher; you're a great leader."

On the way home, I asked my wife, "Veronica, how many truly great leaders do you think there are in the Christian world?" She said, "One less than you're thinking." God didn't do any of this to puff up my ego or your ego. He didn't do it to give you a big, comfortable church. He did it because he wants to reach the city and, through here, to reach the world. Are you ready to be sent?

Bow your heads if you would. Let me give you a couple of questions. There are a lot of ways the Holy Spirit might apply this to you. I'm just going to ask two. Here's the first question: Do you know that Jesus came for you? I imagine there might be somebody here like, "This is my first time at church, and this is why I don't like to come to church. They're always trying to convert me." Let me make this really clear. Yes, we're trying to convert you. How could we not?

We believe Jesus Christ died as the substitute for your sin. That's the core of everything else. Of course we want you to know about it. We're not going to force you to believe it. We want you to take your time, but he has changed our lives, and we believe he can change yours too, and we believe he can forgive your sins for eternity. So, yes, we would love to be a part of that process.

Maybe you're ready to receive him as your Savior. If so, then right now just say, "Lord Jesus, I'm ready. I'm ready to give myself to you. I receive you right now as Savior and surrender to you as Lord." Say that to him right there in your heart. "I'm ready. I'm ready to receive you as Savior and Lord."

Here's my second question. Believer, instead of thinking big, huge things, why don't you think very narrowly in your life. Who is God sending you to? Let the Holy Spirit put something in your heart. Maybe it's a person. Maybe it's somebody in your family. Maybe it's somebody you need to call this afternoon. I don't know who it is. Let the Holy Spirit decide. Just say right now, "Holy Spirit, who are you sending me to? I'm going to assume that whatever name, whatever face pops into my heart is a conversation you want me to have today."

Father, I have prayed all week that you would fulfill your Word to raise up laborers for the harvest. Only you can do that, so I pray that you would do that. In Jesus' name, amen.