

LIVING SENT

how we share and bear good news.

INTRODUCTION

Jesus called his disciples "apostles" which means "sent ones." Being a follower of Jesus means living sent lives seeking to embody and share the good news of Jesus Christ wherever we are. Some call this "evangelism," but the word has become a victim to its own negative associations. This ten-part series looks at what it means to share and bear the gospel *with* others, what it is to live sent lives for Jesus, what it is to be everyday missionaries in the places we live, work and play.

Missionary God

Original "Sentness"

Next Door as in Heaven

Digging Through Roofs

Matthew Party

People of Peace

Can I Get a Witness?

Gospel + Lives

Kingdom Ambassadors

Curious Community

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"Missionary God"

Opening Prayer

God of love and salvation, whose mission is to rescue and restore all creation, we give you thanks for always seeking to save. We give you thanks for the good news of the gospel. Thank you for sending your son Jesus. Thank you for sending your Spirit. Thank you for sending us. Help us faithfully and lovingly to share and bear the good news of your love. Amen.

Opening Question

When was a memorable time that you were trying to find/locate someone or someone or someone was looking for you?

Scripture - Genesis 3:8-9

During that day's cool evening breeze, they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden; and the man and his wife hid themselves from the Lord God in the middle of the garden's trees. The Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"

Discussion

1. What attributes do you normally think of when it comes to God?
2. Why were Adam and Eve hiding? What was right and has gone wrong?
3. What is God's immediate response? What does that say about God?
4. How might this scripture set the stage for the rest of God's mission in the Bible? (Hint: Think about John 3:16).
5. What does it mean for us to think of God's missionary nature as a fundamental attribute of God?
6. David Bosch wrote, "Mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God." Why is this important to understand?

Big Idea

From the opening pages of the Bible, right after human beings rebel against God's love and design, God comes to where we are and desires to search for us. God is a seeking God. God is a sending God. God is a missionary God because God's mission is to restore all creation and heal all that was broken because of sin. God moves toward us.

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"Original 'Sentness'"

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Opening Question

If you had to come up with a fun mission for your family, what would it be?

Scripture - Genesis 12:1-4

The Lord said to Abram, "Leave your land, your family, and your father's household for the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation and will bless you. I will make your name respected, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, those who curse you I will curse; all the families of the earth will be blessed because of you." Abram left as the Lord told him, and Lot went with him.

Discussion

1. Why does God reach out and call Abram and his family?
2. What mission does God give them and what is the desired outcome?
3. What promises accompany this mission for Abraham's family?
4. What does it mean for this family sent on mission to be the way that "all the families of the earth will be blessed?"
5. How does this reflect God's own heart and desire?
6. We sometimes hear the phrase, "original sin" to talk about our tainted human nature. This passage suggests that we have "original sentness." What does it mean for us today that God's mission has always involved sent human beings on a mission?

Big Idea

God is already working out God's rescue plan using human beings. God's mission involves sending a particular family to be channels of God's blessing for the whole world alerting people to God's loving reign. As God's people, this is our vocation and identity as well! We have an "original sentness!"

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"Next Door as in Heaven"

Opening Prayer

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Opening Question

If you had to describe your neighborhood to someone, what would you say?

Scripture - Luke 10:25-29

A legal expert stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to gain eternal life?" Jesus replied, "What is written in the Law? How do you interpret it?" He responded, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus said to him, "You have answered correctly. Do this and you will live." But the legal expert wanted to prove that he was right, so he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

Discussion

1. What is special about the relationship between these two commands?
2. What do you think the legal expert wanted to prove right about himself?
3. Who are your actual, literal neighbors? Do you know their names?
4. How do we begin to love our actual neighbors well? What do we do?
5. How might getting to know and to love our actual neighbors change lives and communities?
6. What are the things that keep us from loving our actual neighbors?
7. How does God model in Jesus Christ how to neighbor well?

Big Idea

You and I are the missionaries in our neighborhoods. God has placed us there to know and love the people who live near us. We are called to take the Great Commandment literally so that lives and communities look more like the Kingdom!

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"Digging Through Roofs"

Opening Prayer

God of love and salvation, whose mission is to rescue and restore all creation, we give you thanks for always seeking to save. We give you thanks for the good news of the gospel. Thank you for sending your son Jesus. Thank you for sending your Spirit. Thank you for sending us. Help us faithfully and lovingly to share and bear the good news of your love. Amen.

Opening Question

What is the most creative/unique form of transportation you've taken?

Scripture - Mark 2:1-5

After a few days, Jesus went back to Capernaum, and people heard that he was at home. So many gathered that there was no longer space, not even near the door. Jesus was speaking the word to them. Some people arrived, and four of them were bringing to him a man who was paralyzed. They couldn't carry him through the crowd, so they tore off part of the roof above where Jesus was. When they had made an opening, they lowered the mat on which the paralyzed man was lying. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Child, your sins are forgiven!"

Discussion

1. What are the barriers keeping this man from Jesus in the story?
2. What are some of the barriers keeping people from experiencing Jesus in our day?
3. What traits do these four friends demonstrate in their efforts to get their paralyzed friend in front of Jesus?
4. What does this story tell us about the importance of friendship with helping people encounter Jesus?
5. What do Jesus' words tell us about the power of bringing people to him?
6. How might we be called to be like the four friends in this story?

Big Idea

As everyday missionaries, we are called to have the heart, the creativity and the relentlessness of these four friends who made sure no barriers got in the way of their friend experiencing the power and presence of Jesus.

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"Matthew Party"

Opening Prayer

God of love and salvation, whose mission is to rescue and restore all creation, we give you thanks for always seeking to save. We give you thanks for the good news of the gospel. Thank you for sending your son Jesus. Thank you for sending your Spirit. Thank you for sending us. Help us faithfully and lovingly to share and bear the good news of your love. Amen.

Opening Question

What is the best dinner party you've ever been to? What made it special?

Scripture - Luke 5:27-30

Afterward, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at a kiosk for collecting taxes. Jesus said to him, "Follow me." Levi got up, left everything behind, and followed him. Then Levi threw a great banquet for Jesus in his home. A large number of tax collectors and others sat down to eat with them. The Pharisees and their legal experts grumbled against his disciples. They said, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"

Discussion

1. Why do you think Levi (Matthew) hosts a dinner party at his home after saying "yes" to following Jesus?
2. Who does Matthew invite and why might he have invited them?
3. What is different about meeting Jesus and his disciples in this way?
4. There is clearly power in gathering around table for meals. What is it?
5. What can we learn from Matthew's party?
6. What discipleship opportunities are created when we invite others to gather with us for food, drink, fun, fellowship?
7. What would have to be true for you to adopt this practice in your life?

Big Idea

Gathering people around food and drink, throwing parties, are a great way to invite people who may be distant from God to experience Christ in community in a non-threatening way. It might be the start of the gospel taking root in someone's life!

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"People of Peace"

Opening Prayer

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Opening Question

Can you think of a person who took a surprising interest in you & your life?

Scripture - Luke 10:3-9

Go! Be warned, though, that I'm sending you out as lambs among wolves. Carry no wallet, no bag, and no sandals. Don't even greet anyone along the way. Whenever you enter a house, first say, 'May peace be on this house.' If anyone there shares God's peace, then your peace will rest on that person. If not, your blessing will return to you. Remain in this house, eating and drinking whatever they set before you, for workers deserve their pay. Don't move from house to house. Whenever you enter a city and its people welcome you, eat what they set before you. Heal the sick who are there, and say to them, 'God's kingdom has come upon you.'

Discussion

1. How would you describe Jesus' sending strategy here?
2. Why does he tell them not to bring anything and to depend on others?
3. What do you think it looks like when someone "shares God's peace?"
4. Why are the disciples told to remain with those who receive them well?
5. How might this plan from Jesus change the way we think about sharing the gospel? How does this differ from other notions of "evangelism?"
6. How do we discern if someone is a "person of peace?" What might be some indicators?
7. Who are some people of peace in your life that Jesus might be sending you to remain with?

Big Idea

Living sent lives means finding people of peace and leaning into friendship and genuine relationship with them. We can then be open to the Holy Spirit and the opportunities that might unfold to move with them closer to Jesus.

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"Can I get a Witness?"

Opening Prayer

God of love and salvation, whose mission is to rescue and restore all creation, we give you thanks for always seeking to save. We give you thanks for the good news of the gospel. Thank you for sending your son Jesus. Thank you for sending your Spirit. Thank you for sending us. Help us faithfully and lovingly to share and bear the good news of your love. Amen.

Opening Question

What is the most exciting/craziest thing you witnessed firsthand?

Scripture - Acts 1:8; 1 Peter 3:15

"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...

Discussion

1. What comes to mind when you hear the word "witness?"
2. What are some of the things the disciples witnessed with Jesus?
3. What does it mean for them to be Jesus' witnesses once he departs?
4. What does it mean for us to be Jesus' witnesses today?
5. What evidence are we called to provide that shows Jesus is the risen Lord?
6. In what ways do we need to be better witnesses of Christ?
7. Witnesses tell a story about something they experienced. What story do you have to share about experiencing Jesus in some way?
8. If someone were to ask you, what is your reason for hope? What would you bear witness to?

Big Idea

Living sent lives means that everywhere we go, we are supposed to bear witness to the person and work of Jesus. We are supposed to testify with our lives and lips that Jesus Christ is Lord by tapping into and sharing out of our own beautiful and hard life stories and our experiences with Jesus.

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"Gospel + Lives"

Opening Prayer

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Opening Question

What is something special that you've shared with someone dear to you?

Scripture - 1 Thessalonians 2:3-8

Our appeal isn't based on false information, the wrong motives, or deception. Rather, we have been examined and approved by God to be trusted with the good news, and that's exactly how we speak. We aren't trying to please people, but we are trying to please God, who continues to examine our hearts. As you know, we never used flattery, and God is our witness that we didn't have greedy motives. We didn't ask for special treatment from people—not from you or from others—although we could have thrown our weight around as Christ's apostles. Instead, we were gentle with you like a nursing mother caring for her own children. We were glad to share not only God's good news with you but also our very lives because we cared for you so much.

Discussion

1. How does Paul talk about the character/integrity of those sharing the gospel?
2. Why might this be important? What does it mean to be trustworthy with the good news?
3. What are the ways this passage suggests the "how" of sharing the message is just as important as the message itself?
4. What are the connections between sharing the gospel and sharing our lives with others? Why do they belong together?
5. "They don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." How does this passage speak to that when it comes to sharing the good news?

Big Idea

The messenger must be consistent with the message. We must only be willing to share the gospel with those we're also willing to share our lives with. Relationship is the root for proclaiming and receiving the Good News. People don't care what we know until they know that we care.

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"Kingdom Ambassadors"

Opening Prayer

God of love and salvation, whose mission is to rescue and restore all creation, we give you thanks for always seeking to save. We give you thanks for the good news of the gospel. Thank you for sending your son Jesus. Thank you for sending your Spirit. Thank you for sending us. Help us faithfully and lovingly to share and bear the good news of your love. Amen.

Opening Question

What is the purpose and role of an embassy? Of an ambassador?

Scripture - 2 Corinthians 5:17-20

So then, if anyone is in Christ, that person is part of the new creation. The old things have gone away, and look, new things have arrived! All of these new things are from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and who gave us the ministry of reconciliation. In other words, God was reconciling the world to himself through Christ, by not counting people's sins against them. He has trusted us with this message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors who represent Christ. God is negotiating with you through us. We beg you as Christ's representatives, "Be reconciled to God!"

Discussion

1. What does Paul mean when he says they are ambassadors for Christ?
2. What is the main thing that Jesus wants his ambassadors to share/represent?
3. If we're called to be ambassadors for Jesus then what does that suggest about our own knowledge of and relationship with him?
4. As an ambassador for Jesus, what do you want people to know about him?
5. How does being an ambassador for Jesus change how we understand our primary citizenship?
6. If we're ambassadors sent by Jesus to represent him, then our lives are like embassies for the Kingdom of God. How might our lives, like an embassy, facilitate an encounter with Jesus and his kingdom?

Big Idea

Just as ambassadors are sent by their country to represent it in another place, we are sent by Jesus to be his ambassadors--faithfully representing him and his kingdom in the places we live and helping to facilitate an encounter between him and others who want to learn more about who he is.

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"Curious Community"

Opening Prayer

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Opening Question

What are the things you think make a community/group compelling?

Scripture - Acts 2:42-47

The believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the community, to their shared meals, and to their prayers. A sense of awe came over everyone. God performed many wonders and signs through the apostles. All the believers were united and shared everything. They would sell pieces of property and possessions and distribute the proceeds to everyone who needed them. Every day, they met together in the temple and ate in their homes. They shared food with gladness and simplicity. They praised God and demonstrated God's goodness to everyone. The Lord added daily to the community those who were being saved.

Discussion

1. How does Luke describe the life of the early church community?
2. What is the reaction of the people and the result of living together this way?
3. What do you personally find most compelling about this description of the early church community?
4. How might the way we do life together in community as Jesus followers communicate the good news of Jesus?
5. What is compelling/not compelling about our shared life as church right now?
6. What in our current social-political context makes this form of sharing the good news more important than ever?
7. How does "belonging" to a Christ-like community set the stage deeper faith?

Big Idea

We do not live sent lives in isolation. We share good news in the way that we do life together with and are in community with other followers of Jesus. Our life together should be so beautiful and unique that it is curiously powerful and draws people in to experience the person and love of Jesus Christ.

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Wrap-Up

What is the biggest thing God is saying to you after this study and these conversations?

What are you going to do about it? What are your next steps?