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## “Our God is a Sending God” Romans 10:1-15

### Introduction

Back in the mid 1980's the Reformed Presbyterian Church of West Lafayette was struggling to regain her footing. They'd gone a year without a pastor. The once healthy student ministry had dwindled to one or two students and the family base was small. But God is a God who builds and rebuilds His Church. By 1986/87 the congregation had outgrown the basement at 545 Hayes Street and moved morning worship services to the gym at Lafayette Christian School. Things were moving forward, the ministry was growing, people were excited. But 1988 saw the beginning of a year of goodbyes. Many grad student families graduated and moved. Several other key families had job transfers. In a period of about one year, the congregation which had grown to a few more than a hundred people, sent away over 50 people.

But God was faithfully bringing others – and building momentum for a church planting work in Kokomo. After several very discouraging set backs, God raised up a pastor (Barry York) and gave enough families to send out 24 people from this congregation to begin the Sycamore R.P. Church. April 19, 1992 we had our first *sending service*.

A year and a half later, in the fall of 1993 we adopted as our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary motto, the theme, *25 Years of Serving and Sending*. And we still believe that. God has called this congregation to be a sending people. It's not an easy calling. If you

were around in those days, you may remember some of the fears we shared, wondering how we would survive nearly half the congregation moving away. Or how a little church of a hundred could daughter a new work and send out some of her strongest leaders.

But the God who sends is a God who brings. Each time there was a great exodus, God brought others to whom we would minister to and who would join us in ministry.

God sends because the world is filled with men and women who need some one to come and rescue them. His plan of redemption is to seek and to save that which is lost. So today, as we embark on this historic occasion, we want to see again that God is a sending God.

### [Romans 10:1-15]

This morning we are going to do a little overview of God's acts of sending in the Bible. The word *send* or *sent* is used nearly 1000 times in the Bible. It's no small theme. At the heart of this study we find a sovereign God who moves people around for His divine purposes. He is the one who controls *our going out and our coming in*. He builds up one and puts down another. He opens one door and closes another. In this regard then, it will help us if we see a little bit of the history of how God has sent men down through history.

#### I. The History of Sending.

One of the most interesting discoveries in an overview of how God has sent people is the finding that he sends in two different and distinct ways. We most naturally think of sending in terms of salvation,

evangelism, missions, etc. But before we consider that, first we need to know that there is:

### A. A Sending of Judgment.

The very first time God ever sent anyone in the Bible was in Genesis 3:22-24. It occurred right after the fall. Following the pronouncement of the curse, God said this. *Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever”— therefore the **Lord God sent him out** from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. So **He drove the man out**; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.*

By sending people away, God demonstrates his displeasure and wrath. Being sent away from the presence of God or the people of God is an act of judgment that foreshadows a much greater sending yet to come.

Think about these great acts of *sending judgment*:

- Cain was sent from the presence of God to wander the earth.
- Those ceremonially unclean were sent away from the temple of the Lord..
- Lepers and diseased people were sent outside the camp or city of the Lord
- The scapegoat, during the Day of Atonement was ceremonially given all of the sins of Israel and sent away into the wilderness.
- Jesus at the end of his 40 days in the wilderness when He was tempted by Satan finally sent Satan from His presence

with the authoritative command, *Begone, Satan!*

- Jesus sent demons out of those whom they possessed.
- Those living in sin and refusing to repent were sent out of the church, *delivered to Satan. Remove the wicked man from your midst*, commanded Paul.

All of these things illustrate and warn of the final day of reckoning when Satan and all his followers as well as all who have rejected Christ will be sent in the eternal lake of fire.

So if we are going to properly understand the topic of sending, we must start by understanding the condition and need of men. If there is no intervention from God, the only sending will be one of serious and eternal consequences. It will be a sending of judgment.

## **B. A Sending of Redemption**

It would be impossible for us to cover all of the times God sent someone in the Bible. But we can look at a few that represent the heart and soul of God's sending for the purposes of redemption.

1. Abraham – Gen. 12. Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father’s house, To the land which I will show you; And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing . . . and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.

Here we have the beginning of the church. Here we have the hope of the gospel. Here we have the promise of Jesus Christ. It was a costly command to Abraham. He had to leave his family and his home and his identity behind. He was called to live by faith. He was required to trust in the

God who called him. He had to believe the promises of God were true – otherwise there was no way he would go. After all, he went out, not knowing where he was going or what the future would hold. But because his sending was based upon the promises of God, he went with confidence.

2. Moses – Exodus 3:10. There he was, standing before the presence of God without any shoes on, listening to God's instructions: Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt.

And when Moses hesitated, God assured him that He would be with him. And when he hesitated again God gave him a foretaste of the power that would go with him. He told him to throw down his staff and it became a snake. He told him to put his hand in his bosom, and it became leprous. He did it again and he was healed.

And so it went in Egypt. God demonstrated his power to the Israelites and to the Egyptians. Time and time again God rained down plagues upon the nation of Egypt. When God sends someone to do His work of salvation, God Himself is ever present. His power is there. His purposes are accomplished.

3. Jonah - The word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai saying, Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me.

And what was the lesson of this prophecy? Jonah summarized it eloquently, if not bitterly, in Jonah 4:2, He prayed to the Lord and said, "Please Lord, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity.

When God sends, He does so because He loves. His compassion drives Him to save that which is lost.

So here at least is a summary of the sending nature of God. His sending His always back up by His **promises** and His **power** and His **love**.

And what better place to see this than in the ultimate of all of His acts of sending – the sending of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ? When I started searching for the verses that specifically speak of God sending His Son, I was quickly overwhelmed with how many of them there are. Many of them we've seen in our study of John.

John 3:16,17 - For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

John 4:34 - Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.

John 5:24 - Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

John 5:37 - And the Father who sent Me, He has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His form.

You get the idea. Jesus came because He was sent. He was sent to save His people from their sins. It was costly to Him. He gave up His life. But the **promise** from the Father was to accomplish salvation. His coming was in **power**. His miracles attested to His identity. His resurrection from the dead was in great power. And His coming was the greatest expression of **love** ever offered.

Promise, power, love – these are behind all of the great sending acts of God.

And so as we stand on the threshold of sending these 70 individuals, as these families and friends are sent out from us, we realize that we are only imitating our sending God. And in that imitation, we are fulfilling His commands.

*As the Father has sent Me, so send I you. (Jn 20:21)*

*Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations.*

*As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. (John 17:18)*

*Go; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves." (Luke 10:3)*

*Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. (Acts 13:3)*

*So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went . . . (Acts 13:4)*

As we send today, the things we have seen in the Scriptures here this morning are no less true for us.

1. Sending and going is a costly thing. We rightly have mixed emotions today. The sad part of those emotions is the understanding of the price that we must pay. We say good bye to something that has been a great blessing to us all. The intimacy of our fellowship together has been very sweet. We have labored and lived, rejoiced and wept together. We've held each others babies and born each others burdens. In the sending and going, we realize that the changes that we have long anticipated are upon us. There is a risk we take

today. We don't know what the outcome will be. We can't see the future. But we are willing to pay the price, we are willing to take the risks because, like Abraham, we have the promises of God. We don't have to know the details of the future. We don't have to fear risk. We don't have to know the final destination. He has promised to build His Church. And that is enough. He has promised to use us as instruments to bring His kingdom on earth. And that is enough. And so we send and we go in faith.

## 2. Sending is a Purposeful thing.

Our goal is not to build our own reputations. It is not to build our own kingdom. It's not so people around the church will think we are something special. WE know better. Nor do we do this because we have an entrepreneurial spirit and it sounds like fun. We don't do it because it's trendy in evangelical circles. We don't do it because we think we might be pretty good at it.

We do it because we have been called to do it. This is God's plan for us. This is the path and purpose He has for this part of His church at this time. It is God who sends us. And when God sends His people, He accompanies them. So we send and we go in the strength of His might. We send and we go, believing that He will be with us. We expect to see Him work. We anticipate His power. We have confidence that when the Word is preached and Christ is proclaimed, whether on this side of the river or that side of the river, there will be those who will respond in faith. Our calling is not to have a nice fellowship on the West side. It's not to give you all over there a church that's a little closer to home. Our calling is to call sinners to faith in Jesus Christ. The purpose of all of this is that the glory of Christ's kingdom might grow.

### 3. Sending is a Loving Thing.

As we send and as we go, our motivation, our desires, our hearts longing and prayers must be for the salvation of those who are without Christ. To what point is all of the effort and energy and work if we are not driven by the love of God for people who need Jesus Christ?

And so, let us rejoice! God is at work. God has called us to go forth. Much blessing will come from this. We look forward to great fellowship and partnership in the gospel. We aren't really saying good-bye. Serving in the same county will bring unexpected blessings. There is much we will still do together. We have the opportunity to see each other as often as we like; to co-labor in much ministry; to exchange preaching pulpits often; to pray knowledgeably for one another.

Let us rejoice in the work and calling before both congregations. Any sadness we feel today, let it be tempered by the greatness of God, the goodness of God and the glory of God as He multiplies our labors in His kingdom and calls us to this wonderful mission.