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The Last Words of Jesus, Part 1

“Go”

Text: Mark 16:14-15

If we *do* talk about sharing our faith and evangelizing the world, we tend to operate in the invitation mode.

“**Come** to my church. We’re having a concert”.

“Please **attend** our Vacation Bible School. We have classes for all ages.”

“We’re showing a film at our family life center. Please **come**. There will be refreshments.”

Come. A friendly word of outreach.

Come. The extension of hospitality in one word.

Yet, when Jesus challenges his disciples to make Him known, Jesus frames it not with the word “come”. He bids us “go”!

**Luke 10:1-3, especially 3a.**

**10**After these things the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them two by two ahead of Him into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. **2**Then He said to them, “The harvest truly *is* great, but the laborers *are* few; therefore, pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest field. **3**Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves.

“Go” is the scariest part of the commission which Jesus utters. To go, one must leave one’s comfortable place, setting, environment, posture, status and relocate. That relocation may be physical, cultural, mental, emotional, or theological. Do you remember when you left the tradition of which you were a part, 10 years ago, and became part of *this* tradition? Do you recall leaving your profession, in which you been active for 15 years and you switched fields completely? You did a “go”. To go is to release the ropes which tether our ships to the dock. To go is to venture into unknown waters and territory.

The traditional thinking of the church has been a focus on the *ecclesia* aspect, the *calling out*. It sometimes causes us to *call ourselves out* so far that we withdraw from the very culture we are to engage. When Jesus commissioned His followers, it was always to engagement, not to insular refuge mentality. We, the church, have put ourselves on house arrest! We have decided to stay indoors, huddled up trying not to get our church clothes dirty.

Do you remember God’s commissioning of Abraham? It was a “go” mandate.

Genesis 12:1

*Now the Lord had said to Abram:*

*“Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house to a land that I will show you.”*

Did you hear it? Yahweh calls Abram, but not to bask in the sunlight of an intimate relationship with Yahweh. No, God calls Abram to engage other people. Verse 2 of Genesis 12 has God saying to Abram, “I will bless you...and you shall be a blessing”. That can only be accomplished if Abram “goes”.

**Illus.**

Many child psychologists, sociologists, parenting experts and social critics have noted that today’s children go outside and play far less frequently than they did a generation ago. Some of that is due to safety concerns. There are pedophiles in some of our neighborhoods and parks. Some of that “children are indoors too much” phenomenon is due to a love of technology that has children choosing video games and their phones and tablets over running around in a park. Many children today rarely go outside. Their whole world is an indoor world. In the United Kingdom, the National Trust research showed that children are playing outside for an average of just over four hours a week. When their parents were children, *they* played outside for 8.2 hours a week. Here, in the United States, the stats are equally dismal. An article I read that was published in 2018 stated that children 10 to 16 were spending only 12.6 minutes a day on vigorous outdoor activity, compared with 10.4 waking hours in which children are being sedentary.

The church is guilty of the same. We spend little time *going.* We spend waaaaaaaay too much time inside. We are spiritually sedentary and are becoming more and more spiritually unhealthy from lack of engagement in the world.

Go!

This commissioning of the faithful has been articulated briefly in Mark 13:10:

*And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations.*

This “go” part of the commissioning is a command, not a suggestion.

Harry Ironside (1876-1951) wrote:

*Interest in missions is not an elective in God’s university of grace. It is something in which every disciple is expected to major.*

Go!

Nearly half the New Testament occurrences of the Greek word for *go* (*poreuomai*) are in Luke and Acts. It is a word of decisive movement.

Luke 9:51-52a

*Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set out to go to Jerusalem and sent messengers on ahead..*

Acts 8:26

*Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying “Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza”.*

Did you hear it? Go!

Acts 12:16-17

***16****Now Peter continued knocking; and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished.* ***17****But motioning to them with his hand to keep silent, he declared to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, “Go, tell these things to James and to the brethren.” And he departed and went to another place.*

Did you hear it? Go!

I read a quote this week, from the writings of Thomas a Kempis “of Kempen”, Germany] (1380-1471; author of *The Imitation of Christ*) that was so sobering that I had to read it multiple times. I close this sermon by reading it twice.

*Instant obedience is the only kind of obedience there is: delayed obedience is disobedience. Whoever strives to withdraw from obedience, withdraws from Grace.*

Amen