

# John 20:21

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[ 0 : 00 ]     Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to all creation.

These are the words of what we commonly call the Great Commission, as they are found in Mark's Gospel. We're also familiar, perhaps even more familiar, with the form of the words that is recorded in Matthew's Gospel.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. But we also have a Great Commission, not really another form of the one that we've already identified, but nonetheless, words that can be described in that way as a Great Commission in John's Gospel, and the words that we've read already this evening.

As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you. They are words of commission. Jesus is commissioning.

He's sending His disciples, and He explains to them something of the manner in which He is sending them, the manner in which they are to go.

[ 1 : 27 ]     As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you. I don't think we should understand that as Jesus is simply saying, well, I was sent, and you're also being sent. There is much more to what is being said here than that.

It's not simply recognizing that there's a connection there. The Father sent me, well, now I'm sending you. No, I think what Jesus is saying is that there is a pattern, there is a model.

In the manner that the Father sent me, as the Father sent me, so I am sending you. Now, I'm not suggesting that there is a direct equivalence in every aspect or in every detail, but nonetheless, I think it is clear that we can legitimately draw from these words of Jesus implications as to the nature of our mission as we look at Jesus' mission, as we consider how the Father sent Jesus.

So, we draw lessons as to how we are to do mission, how we are to be missionaries as those sent by Jesus. So, in these words of Jesus, we're given a rich vein from which we can mine truths for this great task that is ours, to go as we have been sent.

Jesus, in this very remarkable and very revealing way, presents the Father's sending of the Son as His missionary, as the paradigm or model for the mission of the church, the sending of the Christ ones, the Christians, you and me.

[ 3 : 11 ]     Now, this model, if we want to call it that, that is presented by Jesus, as the Father has sent me, I am sending you.

It can be explored from different perspectives and different angles, and that has been done. Many have sought to draw out the implications of these words of Jesus in different ways, going in different directions, not necessarily contradictory ways, but complementary ways.

But this evening, I'm going to limit myself and we're going to limit ourselves to considering these words of Jesus, the model that is presented from one perspective, and that is the joy of Jesus' modeled mission, or if you wish, joyful mission.

In what ways does the sending of the Son, as the model of our sending by the Son, give us an insight into the place, the central place of joy in mission?

Let me suggest four ways, and in the outline there that you have in front of you, you have the four ways that I'm going to consider briefly this evening.

[ 4 : 29 ] And this evening, I'm going to do something I very seldom do, is develop the theme or develop the idea by going to different passages. So we start here with these words of Jesus, this idea of His sending being a model for our sending.

And then having that idea firmly clear in our minds then, as we develop it in this particular way of its implications for this matter of joy in mission, we will travel through the New Testament, exploring the idea with the aid of other verses and passages.

So the four ways that we want to develop this is as follows. The joy of the one sent. There is one who sends. And we want to think about the joy of the one sent.

But we also want to think of the joy of the one who sends. And then we want to consider the joy of the message that is commended, and finally, the joy of mission accomplished.

So we want to think of these things in the matter of the Father sending the Son, and then having identified them in that regard, see how they then have implications for us as we are sent by the Son.

[ 5 : 45 ] First of all then, the joy of the one sent. We're thinking of Jesus, sent by the Father. Now it's sometimes suggested that the Gospels provide little evidence of Jesus rejoicing.

And it is certainly true, and we readily acknowledge that it's true, that Jesus was, in the words of the prophet, a man of sorrows. That is the case.

That is what we are clearly told, and we don't, for a moment, veer away from that reality. But while recognizing that he was a man of sorrows and had good reason for being a man of sorrows, we should be in no doubt that Jesus rejoiced in being sent by his Father and in undertaking his saving mission.

And we can draw out that conclusion, or we can make that statement, I think, with confidence on the basis of Jesus' own testimony. Let's turn to the first passage that I mentioned there in the outline in John's Gospel, the same Gospel, just going back a couple of chapters to chapter 15 and verses 9 to 11.

As we read these verses, having read what we just read concerning the Father sending and the Son, in turn, sending us.

[ 7 : 14 ] When we read these verses, we can see how there are real parallels, even the manner in which Jesus says what he has to say. Let's listen to what he says there in John chapter 15. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.

Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.

I have told you this, so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. You can see the parallels, even the language that Jesus uses here.

Not now as the Father has sent me, I send you. Now as the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. But as he develops that, and as he develops this reality of how he was obeying the commands of his Father and how he is urging the disciples to, in turn, obey his commands, he is not in He concludes what he has to say with these words, I have told you this, so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

Jesus speaks of my joy and he does so in the context of doing his Father's will. As the one sent by the Father, he does the Father's will and that is for him a cause of rejoicing.

[ 8 : 43 ] And his desire is that the disciples would share in that, that as they obey the commands that he gives them, so they too would know the joy that there is in obedience.

As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you. The Father sent the Son on a joyful mission and we are sent likewise.

I was thinking about that reality, the words that came to my mind were words that we find in Psalm 40 and in verses 8 and 9.

What do we read there in that Psalm? I delight to do your will, O my God. Your law is within my heart. I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation.

Behold, I have not restrained my lips, as you know, O Lord. This is the voice of a missionary, of one who is proclaiming God's good news. And how does he describe that activity?

[ 9 : 46 ] How does he consider that task that he has given and that he is fulfilling? I delight to do your will. It is a source of joy and rejoicing to do that which you have commended to me.

The joy of the one sent. Jesus, yes, a man of sorrows, and yet one who rejoiced in doing the Father's will, and whose great desire was that his disciples would share in his joy as they in turn would fulfill their commission.

So the joy of the one sent. But I think we can also develop this theme in a second way. The joy of the one who sends. So not just the one who is sent, but also the one who sends.

I don't think there can be any doubt that the Father rejoices in the obedience of his missionary Son. Think of the words of the Father as he contemplates with deep satisfaction his Son obediently embarking on and engaging in his mission at his baptism and then subsequently at the transfiguration.

And let's just read those two verses that record for us the words of the Father as he contemplates the Son's obedience.

[ 11 : 07 ] So first of all in chapter 3 of Matthew's Gospel and then in chapter 17. So in chapter 3 and verse 17 we read as follows.

The occasion, as we know, is the baptism and familiar words. And a voice from heaven saying, This is my Son whom I love. With Him I am well pleased.

As the Father looks down on his Son about to embark on the mission. Continue certainly on the mission, but embark on the public stage of his mission.

He looks down and he is pleased. He is well pleased with his Son's loyalty and obedience. And of course very similar words that we find in chapter 17 and in verse 5 on the Mount of Transfiguration.

While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them and a voice from the cloud said, This is my Son whom I love. With Him I am well pleased.

[ 12 : 12 ] Listen to Him. The new living translation, which can be helpful sometimes just to give perhaps a refreshing possibility in terms of how a verse can be translated.

That translation translates these words of the Father in this way. This is my beloved Son who brings me great joy. In whom I am well pleased.

This alternative translation suggested, My beloved Son who brings me great joy. And certainly that's the spirit of what is being said.

The Father looks down on his Son, his obedient Son. His Son who is fulfilling the commission that he's been given. Who was sent and who is going faithfully and obediently and perseveringly in the midst of trials and difficulties and suffering.

And he looks down and it is a source of joy for the Father. The Son brings the Father great joy. And I wonder if we think enough about this aspect of our joyful mission.

[ 13 : 17 ] We perhaps can focus, and there's a place for it, on the duty that we have. We have a duty to do what we're told. We are servants.

We do what the Master bids us. And if we have to go, then we have to go. If we have to speak, well, we have to speak. And we must be obedient and fulfill our duty.

And that is, of course, true. But I wonder if we consider, and if we do, what a thrilling thing to be mindful of the fact that as we go and as we obey, we are the source of joy for the one who sends us.

Just as Jesus was a source of joy for his Father, as he was obedient to his commission, and so we too, a source of joy to Jesus and indeed to the Father, as we obey our commission.

And, of course, the other side of the coin, the sobering side of the coin is, what about when we don't obey? What about when we don't go? What about when we resist the call to go?

[ 14 : 23 ] What is the impact of that on the one who sends us? How does he look down on us when that is the reality of our circumstances? So, the joy of the one sent, the joy of the one who sends.

But then, thirdly, we can think of this theme with this third heading, the joy of the message commended. We are sent to proclaim good news to all creation.

That's the job we've been given. In my mind, it just comes to my mind a memory. It's not something I'd scribble down on my bit of paper at all, but it just comes to memory an occasion, oh, many years ago, when I was in a student placement in Razzie, of all places, for six weeks.

And during the time there, I met, well, I met everybody on Razzie. It doesn't take very long. But, well, I don't know if I met everybody, but I met most folk there. And I got into a conversation with one of the locals.

And, well, she asked me what I was doing and what my job was. I said, well, I'm studying for the ministry, and, well, I'm here in a placement. And she was quite intrigued by this. And she said, well, what do you make of that?

[ 15 : 38 ] Like, what do you think about that job? And I said, oh, I've got the best job in the world. She was quite surprised at the thought that a free church minister would be the best job in the world. And the naivety of youth, perhaps.

But, anyway, I said that to her. But, obviously, she needed an explanation. And I said, well, I'll tell you why it's the best job in the world. It's because I get paid to tell people good news. So she found this very intriguing and sort of mumbled something and made her exit, wondering who this strange creature was who had landed on Razzie.

Well, I wouldn't stress too much the financial aspect. But this idea of telling good news, that is what we have been sent to do, to tell people good news.

The gospel, we know what it means. Evangelion, good news. It's good news that we have to tell. It is a joyful message. There is a solemn aspect to it, of course.

But, of course, the good news is accentuated, as we understand our terrible condition and our great need. And the overwhelming, the predominant tone is one of joy, of good news.

[ 16 : 49 ] The message is a message of good news. And, of course, that's how the Bible itself describes the message that we have been given. Remember the angel.

Let's go back to Christmas time. Remember the angel. How did the angel describe the good news to the shepherds as he announced the birth of heaven's missionary?

We know the words recorded for us in Luke's gospel in chapter 2 and verse 10. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.

Good news of great joy. The message that we have been commended. We've been sent with a message, and that message is a joyful message.

Jesus, of course, was not only the bearer of good news. He was and is the good news. News of great joy. Our joyful mission is to go and proclaim good news of great joy.

[ 17 : 50 ] And is it possible to proclaim good news of great joy in any other way than joyfully? I think it would be very difficult to proclaim good news of great joy in any other way.

We somehow manage to do it sometimes. It has to be said. But I think we recognize, and when we think about it, the inherent contradiction of delivering good news of great joy in any other way than joyfully.

The joy of the message commended. Finally, let's think of one other aspect of this that we can consider this evening. The joy of mission accomplished. We begin with Jesus, the one sent by the Father.

Now, in the case of Jesus, our model of one sent, we have a hint of this. This joy of mission accomplished in Hebrews chapter 12 and in verse 2, where we're told that we are to look to Jesus.

Again, he's been presented in some regards there as our model. I'm not saying that the looking to Jesus is only in that sense. But nonetheless, what is it that we're told about him?

[ 18 : 57 ] Look to Jesus who for the joy set before him endured the cross. Who for the joy set before him endured the cross. This was the anticipation of the joy of mission accomplished.

As the Son contemplated the impact, the effect, the redemptive value of what he was about to do.

The agony he was to endure of handing himself over to death and as a sacrifice for sin. And burdened terribly in a way that we can't really begin to conceive.

Yet, in the midst of that, there was joy. And it was this anticipated joy of what would be achieved by his atoning death.

The joy, in this case, of mission accomplished in anticipation. Jesus endured and suffered, strengthened by the prospect of mission accomplished.

[ 20 : 04 ] We are now sent to proclaim the good news of great joy to those for whom Jesus endured the cross. And as they believe and are saved, we also participate in the joy of mission accomplished.

And heaven joins with us. We know that. We know how heaven joins with us in rejoicing, overseeing the fruit of Jesus' saving work.

Being applied to men and women as they're brought to faith. It's good to remember when we think of this joy of mission accomplished.

And just ponder, well, what's the heart of the matter? It's good to remember that while mission can be and legitimately is a varied and multifaceted enterprise. Involving different ways of doing mission.

The heart of the matter is sinners being saved. It's the heart of the matter. Sinners being brought back into friendship with God. It is this that is preeminently and joyfully celebrated in heaven itself.

[ 21 : 16 ] And we have that on the authority of Jesus. He should know. That's where he came from. He knows a thing or two about heaven. And what does Jesus say to us? It's recorded that in Luke's gospel, chapter 15.

Just so I tell you, there will be joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents. Joy among the angels and joy also in God himself.

The one who sits in the presence of the angels before the angels. And what is this joy? How would we describe this joy? Well, we could call it the joy of mission accomplished.

As the father sees confirmed once again the efficacy of his son's work. As he sees confirmed once again the value of his son's work as another sinner is brought to faith.

The joy of mission accomplished. So Jesus commands us to go. To go in joyful mission. And as we go in joyful mission, we reflect on and we're mindful of the joy of the one sent.

[ 22 : 27 ] Jesus fulfilled his mission joyfully. It was a joyful thing for him to obey his father. Well, that too should characterize us. Remember, as the father has sent me, so I am sending you.

And Jesus says, I went and fulfilled my mission joyfully. You too do so likewise. But we think also of the joy of the one who sends. The father, as he looked down on his faithful, obedient son, it was a source of great joy.

And so too, as we obey Jesus in going as we are sent. So let's be thrilled by the prospect and by the reality that our obedience, not just the right thing to do, though it is, but a source of joy for the one who sends us.

And then, of course, the joy of the message commended. It is a message in the words of the angel. Good news of great joy. That is the message that we have. And we also can participate in, in some cases in anticipation, but often in the reality, the joy of mission accomplished as we are used, perhaps as we see it in a very small way.

But used nonetheless. Used of God in some way that a man, a woman, a boy, or a girl might be brought to saving faith. Why go?

[ 23 : 52 ] Well, why wouldn't you go? Will you go? And it begins. The challenge begins now. We return home after a day that God has given us, and the week is before us, and all the duties and responsibilities that the week will hold.

Some of you still have exams to sit, and others, the usual routine of the week. But it is a week in which we are being sent by the Son.

As the Father sent the Son, so the Son sends us to go into the world with His good news. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we do thank You that You are indeed the one who sent Your Son into this world to be our Savior and to secure our salvation.

We thank You for the Son's joyful obedience. We thank You for the insight we're given into Your deep satisfaction as You were witness to Your Son's obedience.

And as we ponder on these things, we're struck by how Jesus Himself then turns to us and speaks to us in the words that we've been thinking about.

[ 25 : 02 ] As the Father sent me, so I am sending You. So we pray that we too would know what it is to serve You and to obey the commission that we've been given with great joy, as we carry a message of great joy, and as we rejoice in the evidence of how the work that we do and the obedience that we render is owned and blessed by Yourself.

And these things we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.