

Title: Going or Sending
Text: Romans 10.5-17
Theme: The cost of missions
Occasion: Mission's Conference 2014 Sunday AM sermon
Prop Stmtnt You are either going or sending.

Read Text:

In the late 1800's India, particularly northern India experienced an amazing and most unlikely evangelism explosion.¹ Provinces of this country that had been previously closed to the gospel were caught up in a missionary movement that remains one of the most amazing outbreaks of gospel conversions since the founding of the church. The movement was fueled by hundreds of missionaries like kindling wood on a fire, who responded to the opportunity who were supported by thousands of churches. These missionaries served along with the many believers in India and were sent by churches in England, Australia, and the United States. But the greatest response came from Wales.

Northern India has never been "open to the gospel." In spite of its reputation for peace and tolerance, there is a militant and oppressive element of Hinduism that has remained entrenched in Northern India for decades. In the late 1800's the caste system was even more in place than today, and headhunting was common. Missionaries and native Christians in India were under no illusion. To profess faith in Christ, or to be identified as a foreigner who preached the gospel was to ask for persecution and in many cases, death.

Some of you have known the pressure that a family can place upon you when you choose to embrace the true gospel of Jesus. One Sunday morning in southern India I participated in the baptism of some new brothers and sisters in Christ. Some of them had been told that if they went through with their baptism, they would no longer be welcome at home. Their stuff would be in the street. They would be treated as if they did not exist. When I speak about baptism as not only a re-enactment of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, but as a picture of our death, with Christ, our being buried with Christ, and the promise of our resurrection because of Christ, I think of some of these brothers and sisters and others who, in this church family have experienced some of the same types of responses from parents and extended family. While we applaud, and we should the profession of faith that is made and the act of submission and obedience to God's command, we need to be reminded that this comes at a cost. This is a declaration that can and in some cases will be used against you. This has been the history of the church. In India, if you only get thrown out of your home, you do not have it too bad. In the northern provinces, they prided themselves on being aggressively hostile to the gospel.

One particular Welsh missionary endured severe persecution, yet God in his mercy not only spared this brother's life but used him to reach the first converts in a village in the province of Assam; a man, his wife and two children. The village leaders were incensed

¹ This information was taken from an article written by Jesse Johnson (May 29, 1013). <http://thecripplegate.com/why-we-sing-i-have-decided-to-follow-jesus/>

and decided to make an example out of this man. They arrested him along with his family. The leaders demanded that he renounce his allegiance to Christ or else they would kill his children. He would not recant, and his children were murdered. He was given another chance to recant. He refused and his wife was killed. Given another chance, he held firm and soon followed his family into glory. The news of the martyrdom of his first converts reached the missionary. In spite of the obvious danger he chose to go back to the village. By the time he got there, the testimony and witness of this man and his family had so gripped the villagers that many of them came to faith in Christ, including some of those who carried out the execution. The gospel, born in death by crucifixion, is advanced through great cost. The greatest cost brings the greatest joy?

The sermon this morning is on the occasion of our 2014 Missions Conference and the commissioning of Andrew and Katie Dodd to South Africa. Andrew served on our ministry staff as a youth intern in 2003-2004. He learned, among other things that year that he really liked Katie Schneider who had grown up here at Cornerstone. God fused their lives and desires together and tomorrow they fly to South Africa where they will commence in a gospel-driven ministry at the Bethesda Outreach Ministry which provides housing and food and education, and medical care for abandoned children, many of whom were orphaned because their parents died of AIDS.

By the way, (and this is more than an aside comment, there is a logical connection to what I am about to say and to the text that we are looking at) the next time that you are engaged in a friendly conversation with an atheist, ask him or her (and I mean respectfully and politely) to name one orphanage that was started, staffed and funded by atheists. What is it about this gospel that would cause a man to leave his country and go to almost certain death so that others would hear? What is it about the gospel that would cause Andrew and Katie to leave family and familiar comforts for demanding, exhausting, and often times thankless work?

If you have not yet professed faith in Christ, I can fully appreciate you thinking, "That's crazy! I can't imagine leaving my family and friends to go and do something like that." If you have not professed faith in Christ, I would expect you to say, "I sure hope my kids would never do anything like that. I can't imagine my kids leaving me." However, if you have professed faith in Christ, and, I am not saying that you don't struggle with it and work through it, but if in your heart of hearts you really believe that you could never give up comforts and familiarity for the sake of the gospel, then I have to challenge you. Do you even understand the gospel? What did you sign-up for? What did you think this was? And perhaps that was the problem. Perhaps you were told that praying a prayer was your ticket to an easier life or something like that. This gospel, this good news about our rescue from sin through Christ alone, was born on the cross. Christ sets the mark and we keep the pace. He talked about the cost of following in terms of picking up your cross daily and following him. We are so soft we think sacrifice is staying away from chocolate for a week so that we can squeeze into our designer jeans. The gospel is our life. It is the focal point of everything that we are and do. We are called and re-made as followers of Christ to make him known. This text before us is very clear. You are either called to go, or you are called to send.

One of the things that I love about Romans is the natural, beautiful and logical combination of theology, passion, and compelling application. If you are intrigued by, encouraged by, humbled by, overwhelmed by and motivated by the doctrines of predestination and election (as you should be), then Romans chapter 9 is a compelling chapter for you. But those doctrines are not meant for seminary settings. Paul writes this in a letter to a local church. And at the beginning of chapter 9 Paul is so consumed with the lostness of his people, the Jews, that he cries out that he would rather go to hell, if it meant that they would hear and embrace the gospel. Predestination drives evangelism and missions. A proper understanding of election drives a white-hot passion for the glory of God. It drove Jesus. It drove Paul. It drove David Brainerd. It drove William Carey. It drove David Livingstone. You can go to Westminster Abbey in London and visit the grave of David Livingstone whose ministry launched the modern missions movement in Africa. On his tombstone is the text from John 10, where Jesus said, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice." This is an example of what I mean when I say, that "deep truths of God are given to drive deep affections for God and deep hunger for God and deep dependence upon God." Not only does Paul preface chapter 9 with an impassioned plea but, he repeats it at the beginning of chapter 10 (v.1). Paul knows the place the Jews have had in the plan of God. He was a Jew! He knows that God called Israel, "my firstborn son." That theme is fascinating because it points back to Adam who was the firstborn in the world and then it points to Christ who was the ultimate firstborn Son, who did what Adam could not and did not do as well what Israel could not and did not do. Paul knows all of this. He knows the irony. Israel was the firstborn who was rejected by the world, who turned around and rejected and killed the firstborn of God (Christ). This is what Paul is dealing with.

I. **Zeal apart from Christ is damning.** (10.1-4)

A. **Zeal alone counts for nothing.** (2)

Paul knows that the Jews have a zeal for God, but it is misplaced (v.2). They have missed the gospel. They have missed the entire point of the Scriptures! This is not a minor point. We may look at the dedication of people to their cause and wrongfully conclude that their determination and sacrifice is to be admired. It is not admirable to be dedicated to a wrong cause that will destroy your life and the lives of others. Zeal that is based on falsehood is destructive. In fact...

B. **Zeal that is not driven by the gospel adds condemnation.** (3-4)

The "ignorance of the righteousness of God" that Paul speaks of is a willful ignorance that is rooted in rebellion. Paul can say this factually and experientially because he was once like this. And verse 4 sets up the division. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." In other words, the purpose of the law is to point us to Christ. The purpose of the law was to reveal that you cannot live according to the law. The law reveals a standard that you cannot obtain. This leaves you with two options.

II. Two ways to live (10.5-10)

A. “Righteousness” based on law (5)

“...the person who does the commandments shall live by them.” Well, who does? No one!

B. Righteousness based on faith in Christ.

“But” in contrast to the attempt to gain righteousness from obeying the law is the person who is declared righteous by faith in Christ (6). This person does not have to perform for righteousness. This person does not have to go on a quest (in the heavens or in the abyss – and attempt to cover the extremes) or on a pilgrimage, or join a reputable charity, or volunteer in a leper colony in order to find righteousness. The righteousness that you need is right here! It is right in front of you! When Paul says this (8) he has the Jewish people in mind. Salvation is right in front of them because not only did Jesus come and live among them and show himself to be the Messiah, but they have the Scriptures. The Scriptures all point to Christ. He is all over the OT. “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart.” You have heard it from childhood. You have memorized it and re-enacted it at every Passover and festival. It is all about Christ! Every sacrifice, every ceremony, every promise is all about Christ.

Through the years, I have shown Cathi my uncanny ability to miss the obvious. This skill, practiced and honed to near perfection shows itself most poignantly in the kitchen. She will ask me to fetch a particular item from the refrigerator. I will open the refrigerator and with great earnestness look exactly where she told me and stare and stare and be utterly stumped. But I do not want to ask for help. It is embarrassing, but I swear, whatever she has asked for, and wherever she has said it is, is not there. But that is not logical, because no one knows this refrigerator like she does, and no one has shown himself to be more inept at such a basic task as this, than I have, and I really want to show progress. So, I am focused, I think, like a sniper on a victim and stare as if the very threat of my stare will cause the item to be spooked out of its hiding place and magically appear and announce itself to me so that I can at long last claim some vindication. But alas, I say, “where did you say that was, again?” It would take her longer to explain it, than to simply reach over, which she does, and grab it from the shelf that is, sure enough, right in front of my nose. Then she will say, “if it was a snake it would bite you.” Sure enough, it was right there. I cannot explain it, other than when the item hears her coming that it jumps out of hiding because I swear that a second ago, it simply was not there.

At any rate, you get this sense of impassioned frustration on the part of Paul for his people. What they need is right there in front of them. It is Christ. And they missed him. It is not that they tried to look for him, they chose not to even look. But he is right there. The offering in place of Isaac, the pillar of fire and the rock that Moses struck, The Tabernacle, the Offering, the High Priest and the Festivals. He is the Passover, the Day of Atonement, the bronze serpent, and the Ark of the Covenant. He is the Son of David, the

Wisdom of Solomon, Isaiah's King and Suffering Servant. He is the perfect prophet, perfect king and perfect priest. He is the I AM that I AM, the Holy, LORD God Almighty and Ancient of Days. He is Abraham's reward, Moses' staff, and Aaron's incense. He is the offering and the offerer. Every story points to him, every truth is fulfilled in him and all the prophecies point to him. If you cut the Bible it bleeds Jesus. He is all over the place and on every page. It is right there. See it! Confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord! Agree with the Scriptures and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead and you will be saved. You will be justified. You will be declared righteous. It does not matter who you are. This is true for the Jews and Gentiles. However, the Jews were the ones who were closest to it. They were the ones who came of age as a nation with the Law. Jesus is all over their history and yet they do not believe him. They were the firstborn of God. They were the people that God had chosen to make his glory known to the nations, but they rejected him. And yet, the plan of God to redeem a people from all over this world will not be stopped. The people who were the closest to it, missed it. But Jesus is not just the only one who can save the Jews; he is the only one who can save anyone. Listen, Jesus is not just the only one who can save anyone, Jesus is the one who WILL save anyone who calls on him. Look at the promise.

III. **The Promise** (10.11-13)

a. **This promise is for everyone.** (11)

Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame. If Jesus can save you, he can save anyone.

b. **Everyone means Jews and Gentiles.** (12)

In fact, there is no distinction. You realize what that means don't you? Categories of race and national origin are surface categories that sinful people seize as excuses to reveal their arrogance and evil. Categories of race do not matter at the cross. The ground is level at the foot of the cross. No one has the high ground at the foot of the cross. "The same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him.

c. **Everyone who believes will be saved.** (13)

This is an incredible promise. We are saved from sin, saved from the penalty of sin, we are being saved from the power of sin, and we will be saved from the presence of sin. We are not only saved from, but we are saved to. We are saved to everlasting life with Christ. We are saved to the body of Christ and the kingdom of Christ. We are saved to wholeness, to forgiveness, to reconciliation and to newness.

Think of it like this: We are saved from sin and self-righteousness (which is another manifestation of sin). Self-righteousness and sin is nothing more than self-love. What do we call a person who loves himself? He is selfish. He is an idolater and he is miserable. He is miserable because no one in the world will love him like he loves him. Self-lovers usually hang out with other self-lovers and are miserable together. When you come to

faith in Christ, you are **SAVED** from that! You are saved from being miserable because you are saved to God. Why is that so transforming?

Ok, let me ask you a question. According to John 3.16, why did God give his only Son to come and die for our sins? (Because God loved us.) Ok, let's take it a step deeper. Why did God love us? (Because He created us, besides, God is love.) Ok, why did God create us? Jesus came to this earth to secure our redemption so that the love that the Father has eternally had for his Son can now be **IN** those who believe in him, so that we can enjoy the Son as the Father has always enjoyed the Son. And not only that, but the love that the Son has for the Father might also be in us, and we can now enjoy that too. This salvation rescues us from a devastating, heart-shrinking, soul-shriveling, spirit-hardening self-love and saves to a real love that comes from the Father who so delights in his eternal love for His Son that he desires to share it with all who will believe in Him. In other words, the Father sent the Son because the Father loved the Son so much that he wanted to share that love and fellowship. His love is that good! Instead of hoarding his glory and his love, the Father lavishly pours it out on his Son and he sends his Son who lavishly pours out the love that he has been given on all who believe in him, so that we can share in his fullness (Eph 3.19). The more people who love Jesus, the more the love of the Father and the love that the Father has for the Son is put on display and reverberates through creation. But, this reveals a problem and an opportunity.

IV. The Problem (10.14-15a)

- a. People will not call on Jesus, unless they believe on Jesus.
- b. People will not believe on Jesus unless they hear about Jesus.
- c. People will not hear about Jesus unless someone preaches.
- d. Someone won't preach unless they are sent.

V. The Opportunity and the Challenge

Do you believe this?

A. Are you willing to go?

What does it mean to be willing to go? It means that we look at our lives as being on mission for the gospel every single day. It means that if God opens up a door of gospel ministry with a neighbor, we step through it. If he opens up a door of gospel ministry with a family member, we step through it. If he opens up a door of gospel ministry with a co-worker, we step through it. All of this means that we need to be looking for doors to be knocking on. If God opens up a door for you to minister the gospel in your local church, you step through it. If God opens up a door for you to minister the gospel in another country, which he will make that clear through your church, you need to be willing to go and your church needs to be willing to send you.

B. Are you willing to send?

What does it mean to be willing to send? It means that we look at our lives as being on mission for the gospel every single day by thinking, how can we as a church get more people into gospel ministries? Do you realize that our missionaries seriously need your prayers? Do you realize that our missionaries have food and shelter because we (you and me) send them money? Paul wrote this letter to the Romans while he was in Corinth. He was able to minister to the people in Corinth as a missionary because the church in Philippi was supporting him financially.

This is not a theoretical challenge. It is not simply for Andrew and Katie. They are going as our representatives. The effectiveness of their ministry depends in great measure upon our praying and giving. If every believer sent or went to the degree that you do, what would missions look like in this world?