

Series: What Jesus Would Say

VBC

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John 20:19-23

“Jesus’ Conversation with the Church”

Physicist Niels Bohr notes—“Prediction is very difficult—especially when it is about the future”

- will this be the year—
- the unemployment drops below 6%
- kale is replaced by another new trend
- scientists find another earth
- the Padres and Mets become respectable
- THE CHURCH WAKES US?

- Sometimes it feels the church is slumbering through serious times
- in a December WSJ article, “America the Vulgar”, Lee Siegel asks—
“How do you shock people who have seen and heard everything?”
- the living room has become a locker room
- the door between the private and the public is no longer closed
- genitalia language is commonplace—mention of sexual parameters is viewed as repressive

- some of the latest new laws reflect the trend—
- in Colorado—recreational marijuana is now legal
- in California—transgender students can use restrooms according to the gender they identify with
- and in this year’s Tournament of Roses parade, its theme “Dreams Come True” was celebrated with a gay couple wed during the parade on a giant wedding cake float

- at the risk of sounding like some fighting fundamentalist—*some angry culture warrior*
- it seems like we have lost sight of our moral lines
- more than tolerate—we celebrate a certain depravity
- and something wants to scream—WAKE UP CHURCH!!!

- but what if we are awake—what if we are fully aware?
- what if the problem lies elsewhere
- this seems to be the case in John 20—read 19-23

- John gives us a picture of the first church—on the first night after the resurrection
- safe, behind the walls—fully aware and awake
- but thoroughly intimidated by its world

- A. the FIRST thing Jesus did was calm their fears
- B. the SECOND thing Jesus did was commission them

-this is John's version of the great commission

- but they were not getting it
- when they saw that it was Jesus—they were overjoyed
- their immediate assumption was that Jesus was about to restore everything (other texts tell us this)
- they were thinking Messianic—but as the text tells us—Jesus is thinking missional
- they were thinking He would now take over—but Jesus was about to take off...
- AND NOW IT WAS TIME TO HAND OFF!
- Jesus was passing the baton
- reminding them that from the beginning—this is why He called them—AND US
- letting them know —“You’re not going to impact anyone inside these walls”

- the Sent One was now the Sending One
- apostello—apostles—sent ones—this is who we are
- but what does this mean? We have to get this!

1. SENTNESS MEANS A SUBMITTED LIFE

- “sentness” implies submission to someone else’s will
- messengers, emissaries, ambassadors do not exercise their own rights—fulfill their own agendas, exert their authority
- Jesus did not—He came to fulfill His Father’s will
- He came because He was sent—and “sentness” is a “master thought”ⁱⁱⁱ repeated over and over to make the point
- 3:34—For God SENT Him and He speaks God’s words
- 4:34—My food is to do the will of Him who SENT Me
- 5:30—I do not seek My own will but the will of Him who SENT Me
- 6:38—For I have come down from heaven, not to do My will, but the will of Him who SENT Me
- 7:16—My teaching isn’t Mine but is from the One who SENT Me
- 14:24 the word that you hear is not Mine but is from the Father who SENT Me

- God wants to tell us repeatedly that in every relationship and every situation Jesus came as One who was SENT
- sent as one in complete submission to the Father’s will
- One wholly indifferent to any other will

-now we are sent—and it will require a similar surrender

- it means I approach each day with the posture of submission that (like Isaiah) says—“Here I am. Send me” (6:8)
- it looks at my weekly agenda—everything—through the grid of sentness
- it yields to God and says no to situations He has not sent us into—pornographic websites, impure relationships, unwise investments, wasted moments
- it listens carefully to the Word, the internal working of the Spirit for hints of where He is sending me next—which might be across the ocean or even next door

Illustration—lately—we have been in damage control

-our dog has become infatuated with our neighbor's dog—more like obsessed—no—possessed!
-and his barking, chewing on the fence has not helped our relationship with our new neighbors
-the other night I stopped at the store and bought flowers—I have not met these people
-and apologized for my dog's excessive hormonal impulses—but my intent was not merely nice—
-I have been SENT to them to be Jesus

-this is what made the likes of Abraham, Moses, David, Esther, Daniel, Jeremiah great was this—they came to grips with the fact they were sent—and they submitted to this
-going into situations they would not have done on their own
-Paul approached his whole life as a sent man because he understood that coming to Christ means we have been bought with a price—*we have no rights—only responsibilities*
APPLICATION—is this your posture?

2. SENTNESS MEANS A MOVEMENT LIFE

-because Jesus came as One sent—there was a dynamism about Him
-if you wanted to meet Jesus—you met Him on the road
-He did not invite people to stay with Him—but follow Him
-even if it means leaving career or family responsibilities

-He was always moving—often to where He was not invited
-sent to a wedding, sent across the tracks to a woman at the well, sent to an unresponsive paralytic, sent to a narcissistic crowd, sent to a blind man, sent to the world, sent to the cross
-sent on the Father's schedule

-there's a reason the first believers were referred to as *The Way*—they were people on a journey

Point—sentness implies motion—if the contemporary church is to recover its sentness—it must think like a movement

-not be so encumbered by policies and procedures and facilities (necessary as they all are)—that we become less a dynamic movement—more a static institution

-the physical church must see itself as an airport—a facility equipped to send people somewhere—not keep them inside

-ask yourself—is there an “apostolic” dimension to your life—verses a sedentary one?
-Jesus told His disciples—get moving—and don't limit yourselves to Judea
-get out—be it at work, in the classroom, in the neighborhood, the ballpark, the club, the homeless shelter, on a plane—across the ocean—wherever people live their lives
-the church is not to be a refuge from the world—so much as a force in the world—a force in the community

-here's a view of our immediate world (Beaverton) according to a New Year's day article in The Oregonian—

- we are in large community—90,000, 3700 businesses, 11 neighborhoods
- we are in a growing community—growing at about a 1000 new people each year
- we are a young community—median age—34 (1 in 10 is over 65/ 1 in 5 is 18 or younger)
- an educated community—43% of those over 25 have a college degree
- a diverse community—73% are white Anglo/ 16% Hispanic, 11% Asian/ 3% black
- a fairly affluent community—median income—55000 (12% live below poverty line)
- “Growing City is Fairly Young and Keeps Diversifying” (Oregonian, Jan 1, 2014)*

- this is where God has planted us—SENT US!
- this is our Jerusalem—it is not enough to say “Come to us”
- sentness means stepping into the neighborhood

APPLICATION—who are you seeking to reach in 2014?

3. SENTNESS MEANS AN EMPOWERED LIFE

- when Jesus began His ministry—the Spirit came upon Him—Matthew 3:16
- at the beginning of the disciples ministry—the same thing was necessary—read verse 22

- Jesus is reenacting Genesis 2:7—where God’s empowering breath took something lifeless and immobile and created life and movement
- He breathed resurrection life in them—as He does in us
- can you sense it—feel His breath?

- we have to—for being sent to represent the will of Jesus is a responsibility too big for any of us
- we will need God’s breath, God’s wind, God’s Spirit
- the lifeless and immobile church today needs the same empowering breath into us in order to do His willⁱⁱⁱ

4. SENTNESS MEANS A MISSIONAL LIFE

- here Jesus spells out what we are sent to do—read verse 23

- at the heart of our mission is a call to do the two things—the same two things Jesus was sent to do—

1. EXTEND GOD’S FORGIVENESS

- this is why He was sent—for at the heart of God is this—He is a forgiving God
- so Jesus was given the authority to forgive sins—Matthew 9:6
- on numerous occasions He made preemptive strikes on the human condition and forgave sin—Mark 2:5

- the church’s role is to join God in the action
- apply His work of grace to people
- exercise the authority given us to declare the gospel—
- confront sin
- convey forgiveness to those who turn back from their sin
- this, according to John, is the church’s essential mission*

-we live from the power of forgiveness—our responsibility is to proclaim it, live it, extend it
-it is God who ultimately does the forgiving—but we are called to be the agents applying it

2. WARN THE UNRECEPTIVE

-that if one dismisses the offer
-if one is unwilling to let go—but hold on to sin
-then forgiveness cannot be extended—sin is “retained”—God’s mercy is forfeited
-sin that could have been swept away remains part of us
-for forgiveness is not a possibility to the unrepentant

-ultimately we have been sent to set things right in a broken, sinful world
-restore people to what God intended for them to be
-and warn the unreceptive there is no forgiveness for denying God
OUR DRIVING MISSION HAS TO BE—GET PEOPLE RIGHT WITH GOD!

CONCLUSION

-what will you live by in 2014?
-here’s a challenge—take these words of John 20:21 and make them your words
-what if everything we intend to do must first pass through this grid—AS THE FATHER HAS SENT ME—I AM SENDING YOU?

-Harvard philosopher George Santayana once wrote:

“In accomplishing anything definite a man renounces everything else”

-if we are to accomplish something definite—we will need to have less distraction—more focus on our sentness

ⁱ “America the Vulgar”, Lee Siegel, WSJ, Dec 7-8, 2013

ⁱⁱ Morris, John, 845

ⁱⁱⁱ NT Wright, John for Everyone, 150