

NAZARENE  MISSIONS

A  
MOVEMENT  
OF GOD  
THROUGH  
THE PEOPLE  
OF GOD

SERMON GUIDE

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*sermon one*  
**SENT: LOST AND FOUND**  
*John 20:21*

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## INTRODUCTION

The first sermon begins with the story of John and Daniella, who famously lost their engagement ring down a sidewalk grate in New York City. This story captures the idea of something precious that was lost being found. Jesus' words in John 20:21 are also something precious that the church today has "lost," but we can "find" them again by unpacking their meaning.

One word in particular stood out in this passage: the tiny word (in English) "as." In the original language, it is *kathos*. This one little word has such a powerful impact in Jesus' conversation with His followers. The body of the message reminds us of the power of that word so we don't lose its power over our lives.

### I. WE ARE SENT

- A. Jesus is very clear in His direction
- B. Jesus began the work and has given it to us to carry forward
- C. The good news isn't just for us but for everyone
- D. There is a purpose in our redemption
- E. We can't confuse the starting line with the finish line

### II. WE ARE SENT AS

- A. "As," or *kathos* in the Greek, means just what it appears to mean
- B. Jesus sends us out as the Father sent Him
- C. So how was Jesus sent?
  1. Obediently – Jesus lives in total obedience to the Father
  2. Incarnationally – Jesus came in the flesh, and we are to embody our faith
  3. Spirit-empowered – Jesus' baptism, His breathing on them in 20:21 and at Pentecost

### III. WHY ARE WE SENT?

- A. To, like Jesus, proclaim His Kingdom far and wide
- B. To do so until Jesus returns
- C. To do so because the need is urgent

## CLOSING

The closing illustration pictures Jesus out in front, leading the way and calling us to follow Him.

**J**ohn Drennan and Daniella Anthony had the perfect “Instagram” engagement... well, almost. They traveled from Great Britain to New York City’s Central Park where John popped the question. Daniella tearfully agreed and though the engagement ring wasn’t yet sized, she slipped it on and they celebrated with a walk through Times Square. In the course of their cuddling and hand-holding, John brushed Daniella’s hand and the ring slid from her finger, and to their horror, bounced twice and then disappeared down a Times’ Square sidewalk grate. Closed circuit TV actually captured their exasperation and shows the couple frantically looking down into the grate, broken hearted.

I hate to lose things. It’s not something that happens often to me, but when it does it almost drives me crazy. But as much as I hate it, it happens. Things get lost. At present there is one lonesome wool sock in my dresser drawer, pining away for its mate. I blame a hungry dryer.

Sometimes even big things get lost. Scientists tell us there are multi-million dollar satellites lost in space. Can you imagine that conversation between scientist and supervisor? Just a few years ago, an entire airliner was lost with all those on board. How does that even happen? And who hasn’t spent a wasted hour pondering the History Channel’s special on the Bermuda Triangle? Like it or not, things get lost... even important things. It also happened in the Bible!

In 2 Kings 22, while King Josiah was remodeling the temple, the High Priest discovered the lost book of the Law. When he read it to Josiah, the king was undone! He tore his robes in grief and called a solemn assembly. Right then and there, King Josiah vowed once again to uphold the covenant between God and God’s people. What was lost was found.

The same is true for John and Daniella. What was lost was found. Thanks to the quick action of the NYPD and the worldwide reach of social media, John and Daniella were reunited with the ring... she still said, “Yes.”

In John 20, Jesus appears to be lost. Mary can’t find him. Peter and John run to look but return to the other disciples perplexed. Then Jesus appears, first to Mary, then later that evening to the disciples gathered in the upper room. It’s a beautiful scene as Jesus speaks peace over them and shows them His wounds and they rejoice.

Perhaps it’s the stress of the disciples’ last few days or the crazy delight in Jesus’ return, but the disciples appear to miss something important that Jesus says in the upper room. Jesus has a job for them to get busy doing, but they seem to miss His assignment. We gather this because as John 21 opens, Peter and the others seem a bit dejected and even return to their pre-Jesus profession of fishing.

Is it possible that we, too, have missed something important that Jesus said? I read an article that said recent studies of the KJV Bible reveal that 783,137 words are used. That’s a lot of words! Can’t we be excused for missing one or two? Probably, but the words Jesus spoke in John 20 were enormously important. As Jesus appeared before them and showed them His wounds He said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” He went on to say, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

Wow! Did Jesus just give us the power to forgive sins?

That’s powerful stuff to consider. In fact, I wonder if we get so caught up in what verse 22 might mean that we lose verse 21. We are lured by the ultimate power of acting like God and bypass the humble service of being sent like Jesus.

I believe that in one simple sentence, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you,” Jesus calls us to radical Kingdom living. He offers us a vocation, an ethic, and an example to imitate. But I also fear that we have lost track of those words these days.

Listen again to these simple words, but this time, open your mind and your heart. Let these words take up residence in your soul for a few moments.

“As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”

There is so much to be gleaned from these words, but let me offer just a few things that seem important today.

First, we are sent. There is no mistaking Jesus’ intentions here. He appears to His disciples, calms their fears, looks them in the eyes, and points them outward. Of course they are gathered together. Of course they are afraid. Of course they are paralyzed by the uncertainty of what they have just witnessed and what may lie ahead for them. Yet, Jesus comes to them in this crucial moment and makes His plans crystal clear.

He directs them to carry on the work that He has been doing. Jesus lived for others, and He calls His followers to do the same.

I fear that we may be in danger of losing an important reality of the gospel. By definition, gospel means “good news.” While it is always good news to know that our sins can be forgiven through the grace of God in Christ Jesus, I fear that all too often our understanding of “good news” ends right there... with our own salvation. Gospel means good news, and that good news isn’t just for us personally: it is also good news for a lost world. There is a purpose in our salvation. It is not to huddle away like these upper-room disciples avoiding the world around them. It is to take on the very character of Jesus, be filled with His Spirit, and join Him in the work that He initiated then, continues now, and will complete one day when He returns. My concern is that we have unintentionally made the “finish line” what Jesus intended to be the “starting line.” Our salvation isn’t the end of the journey; it is the beginning. Our salvation has purpose, and that purpose is to be sent into our homes, schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods as bearers of the good news—our lives lived “on mission” with Jesus.

How fitting that a core value of the Church of the Nazarene is that not only are we Christian and holiness, but we are missional. We are sent.

Second, there is a tiny word in John 20:21 that bears tremendous weight in this passage. The tiny word “as” (*kathos*) cannot be overlooked. It would be one thing for

Jesus to acknowledge that He was sent and then to send us. But when Jesus clarifies the sending with “...as the Father has sent me...” it invites us to carefully consider how Jesus was sent.

John’s Gospel is rich with instances where Jesus reminds His disciples that He lives in perfect obedience to the Father (5:19-30, 8:29, 15:9-10). So initially we have to receive Jesus’ commission in this text with a similar spirit. Like the disciples, I also hear the directive in Jesus’ words. I cannot be a follower of Jesus and disobey His directive any more than Jesus could have been on mission yet living in disobedience to the Father. Jesus became obedient to the Father’s will, and I must, in turn, live in obedience to Jesus.

It is also John who so beautifully reminds us that “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14, NIV). How was Jesus sent? He was sent in the flesh. Theologians call this “The Incarnation”—the divine spark of life in the womb of Mary, born as we are all born, experiencing the harsh realities of life in the flesh. The implications of this are so clearly seen in John 20:21. The disciples are directed by their risen Lord to leave the safety of the upper room and enter into the harsh realities of the world around them. They are to bear the life and love of their Savior in their own bodies and to share it in the ways humans share—person to person, eye to eye, heart to heart. How clear this call seems to us.

I love the words of the late Eugene Peterson in his rendering of Romans 12:1-2. He says, “So here’s what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering.” Isn’t this the essence of being sent “as” Jesus was sent? We carry His gospel within us everywhere we go.

Though there is so much more to this little word “as,” we can’t forget something essential to the way Jesus was sent, and that is the presence of the Spirit. There is a lot of debate among theologians on this particular instance of the giving of the Spirit in John 20 as it relates to the upcoming Day of Pentecost. I don’t really want to enter into that debate; instead I want to emphasize that one thing is clear. Jesus operated under the power of the Spirit given to Him

at His baptism, and we must do the very same in our “sent lives.” The very core of the good news is that not only has God acted mightily in history to save us, but God has provided His Spirit to indwell and empower us. Jesus sends them as He was sent—under the power of the Holy Spirit.

So it seems clear from Jesus’ words that we are sent and that we are sent in a particular way—as Jesus was sent. But to what end? What is the purpose of Jesus sending us out as the Father sent Him?

That’s the last thing I want to mention to you today. In the first place, Jesus Himself reminded His disciples that the purpose of His coming was to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God far and wide. As we have already affirmed, the good news is for everyone, of every tribe and tongue, far and near. Our message of hope isn’t confined to a certain region or people group. One of the things I love about being a Nazarene is that from our inception we have taken Jesus’ commission seriously. What a thrill to know that if I get off of an airplane on any continent, it wouldn’t take me long to find the people called Nazarenes. Our gospel heritage runs directly to the upper room of John 20 and reaches out to every nation.

Secondly, we believe that Jesus is coming back and that we have something to do until His return. The sacrificial, incarnational, and Spirit-empowered work of Jesus is stamped with the word “Urgent.” Our salvation and sanctification are not merely to protect us as we huddle together but to propel us outward to the people in our circles of influence who need the hope that only Christ can offer.

Not only is the need urgent, it is ongoing. Statisticians tell us that there are 250 babies born every minute of every day. What a staggering thought! Who will tell them the magnificent story of God? Who will befriend them with the authentic love of Christ? Who will be the hands and feet of Jesus in their neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces?

Jesus said, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” Let’s ask ourselves this question today. If Jesus was in my role in life, to whom would He minister? Who would He ignore or exclude? No one. Jesus was sent because God loved “...the world,” and I am sent to that world with His good news.

## CLOSING

I once heard a pastor use an illustration about teaching children to walk. He said, “What we don’t do is fill the room with hard, sharp objects, sneak up behind the little tot, and give them a shove. Instead, we clear the room of anything dangerous. We prop them up against something solid, then we move a few paces in front of them and urge them to come to us.” I can still remember our son’s first wobbly steps and his one-point landing on his backside with a look of confusion. It wasn’t long, however, until he got the hang of it, and I think we chased him for 18 years thereafter.

Isn’t this what Jesus is doing in John 20? Jesus is the one to go first. He is the Giver, the Sacrificial One, the Crucified One, the Resurrected One. He emerges from the grave and comes to His huddled disciples. He calms their fears and calls them forward. If any words characterize the ministry of Jesus aren’t they “Follow me”?

You and I have been the recipients of the prevenient work of Jesus. He has gone before us, made the way, shown us the way, and empowered us to walk it. We are propped up on the solid foundations of the scriptures and the traditions of the church. Jesus has cleared the path and invites us to come to Him, and in so doing to engage our world with His good news. Wow! What an offer! What an adventure! What meaning to our lives in Christ.

Are you a little nervous? Have you tried before and, like a toddler, gotten tripped up and landed hard? Are you convinced that you aren’t worthy? Let me remind you that Jesus’ words in John 20 were first “peace be with you.” He has gone before us and made a way for us. He has the scars to prove it. We can trust his words, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”



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*sermon two*

**SENT: DELIVERY SYSTEM**

*Matthew 4:23, 9:35*

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## INTRODUCTION

The beginning of this message is an effort to help our people begin to understand the importance of the gospel being tangible. It is one thing to know something; it is quite another to do something with that knowledge. Online retail seemed like a common North American way to lay some groundwork for the big idea of this message. The big idea is that Jesus' ministry was characterized by teaching, preaching, and healing and that both the church and we, as individuals, can take up this same ministry in obedience to Jesus.

This message is second in the series "Sent." It builds on the idea of "Sent: Lost and Found" as it further fleshes out John 20:21, "as the Father has sent me..."

### I. JESUS' DELIVERY SYSTEM

- A. Here we trace the work of Jesus as described in Matthew 4:23 and 9:35
- B. These examples show Jesus as He teaches, preaches, and heals

### II. TRUE FOR JESUS, TRUE FOR THE CHURCH

- A. This section simply attempts to translate the ministry of Jesus to the life of the church
- B. By explaining what teaching, preaching, and healing might look like in our churches, listeners can relate this passage to today's world

### III. TRUE FOR THE CHURCH, TRUE FOR ME

- A. This section makes the message personal
- B. Listeners should begin to feel the personal responsibility to, themselves, find ways to disciple, evangelize, and show compassion

## CLOSING

The closing illustration could be personalized by the preacher to almost any situation where someone may appear to know what they are doing, but in reality have no idea what to do. There are plenty of documented accounts of similar situations involving famous people and organizations.

sermon two

**SENT: DELIVERY SYSTEM**

Matthew 4:23, 9:35

**E**-commerce is huge! Online retailer Amazon seems to have everything, and even traditional retailers are beginning to learn the online retail game. Competition for the \$119 billion spent this past year between Thanksgiving and Christmas in e-commerce is enormous. That dollar figure represents an increase of 15 percent over the previous year.

But even if online retailers have every conceivable thing that any person could possibly want, without an effective delivery system, they are just filling up warehouses.

There is no e-commerce without delivery systems like UPS and FedEx. According to their websites, FedEx delivered 400 million packages this holiday season and UPS delivered 750 million packages.

The means of delivery is essential! Delivery systems matter and not just in online shopping.

A teacher may be brilliant, but without the proper skills in communication and information technology, all of that brilliance lives only in the mind of the teacher. An automobile with 1,000 horsepower goes nowhere without the means to transfer all of that power to the street. Gears, transmission, axles, wheels and tires... it all matters. It's all a part of the delivery of that power.

The gospel is God's good news for the whole world. It is more than the treasures of Amazon, more than the wisdom of centuries of sages, and more powerful than anything in all the world. Yet, without an adequate system of delivery, the gospel is essentially warehoused in the hearts and minds of believers and ineffective in the mission for which it was intended: the redemption of the world.

The Gospel of Matthew is beautiful. After a lengthy genealogy, Matthew tells us about the Magi and the escape to Egypt. He fast-forwards to John the Baptist and before you know it, Jesus is being baptized. Chapter 4 outlines

Jesus' time in the wilderness, His inaugural preaching, and the calling of the first disciples.

Chapters 5 through 7 of Matthew are the Sermon on the Mount. In this, the longest recorded teaching of Jesus, we get all the parameters of the kingdom of God Jesus is announcing. The people are spellbound as the rural Galilean teacher spells out what it means to follow Him. In Chapters 8 and 9, it seems like Jesus is on a healing tour. Everywhere He goes, it seems that He is bringing people back to health and wholeness. Matthew groups these miracles into three sections, dividing them with moments of teaching from Jesus.

Matthew has a particular interest, however. It's almost like Matthew understands logistics. He seems to get the reality that the means of delivery is crucial for the gospel. In Matthew 4:23, Matthew summarizes what Jesus was busy doing: teaching, preaching, and healing. Later in chapter 9, verse 35, we get another almost identical summary. What lies in between are stories of Jesus doing exactly what these two "bookends" describe: Jesus went about teaching, preaching, and healing.

Biblical scholars believe that Matthew places the summaries of Jesus' ministry in 4:23 and 9:35 on either side of material he wants to be sure we don't miss. It's the equivalent of two flashing arrows pointing at and highlighting the ministry of Jesus—His delivery system.

It is this ministry that is important for us today.

If the Sermon on the Mount is the head and heart part of the gospel, then chapters 8 and 9 are the hands and feet part of the gospel. The first section tells us what to think; the second section tells us what to do. Or, in the language of the introduction, chapters 8 and 9 are Jesus demonstrating what to do with chapters 5 through 7. In other words, in Jesus' teaching, preaching, and healing, He demonstrates the delivery system for God's good news.

Like we said above, the delivery system is crucial.

## I. Jesus' Delivery System

Matthew describes Jesus' means of delivering the gospel first as teaching. In Matthew 4:23, he says that Jesus made it a practice to go throughout Galilee and teach in the synagogues. It must have been astonishing to hear His teaching. In fact, the people who heard Him consistently remarked that Jesus taught with powerful authority (7:28-29). But it wasn't only the formal teaching times that Jesus leveraged. Consider the current trend of "life on life" discipleship that many churches espouse. Without question, this was Jesus' method as well. Walking the dusty roads, sleeping under the stars, mingling with the crowds, handling crises; in all of these settings, Jesus taught and modeled what it was like to be in communion with His Father and to live in utter obedience. The disciples, in true first-century rabbinic tradition, attached themselves to Jesus and hung on His every word and action.

Jesus also preached. Certainly the Sermon on the Mount would be the prime example. Matthew demonstrates that Jesus is the fulfillment of the scriptures and that He truly is the Messiah. In Matthew 5 through 7, Jesus lays out the parameters of His in-breaking kingdom and calls His followers to align with these parameters. Unquestionably Jesus preached on other occasions as well. Again, all over Galilee Jesus went about "...proclaiming the good news of the kingdom" (4:23, 9:35). Imagine the thrill of hearing Jesus Himself proclaim "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near" (4:17, NIV).

We cannot miss Jesus' healing in Matthew... in fact, Matthew hardly gives us the chance to miss it! Healing the sick and broken was essential to Jesus' earthly ministry. In the "Matthean bookends" of 4:23 and 9:35, Jesus was "...healing every disease and sickness among the people." Chapter 9 alone begins with the healing of the paralytic. This section is paralleled in the other Gospels, which point out that this is the man lowered on a mat by his friends through the roof. What a story! Everyone needs friends like that! After the calling of Matthew and some teaching about fasting, Jesus raises a dead girl and heals the woman with the issue of bleeding. Who can forget that dramatic scene in Matthew 9:18-26? What power and what compassion Jesus simultaneously embodied! From there, two blind men

call out for His healing mercy, and He heals them along with a demon-possessed man who could not speak. All of this in only 34 verses! Matthew won't let us miss that His miracle working Nazarene is, in fact, the long awaited Messiah, the very Son of God.

But what does all of that mean to us? Is there something here that is relevant to us today?

## II. True of Jesus, True for the Church

I contend that there is something crucial for us. In John's gospel (14:12), Jesus famously says, "Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father." I often get hung up on the part of that verse that implies that I might do something even greater than Jesus and miss the part of that verse that is essential for us today. Jesus says that whoever believes in Him will do the works that He has been doing! Who are those believers? Isn't it us... the church? And what are those things that Jesus was doing? According to Matthew, they were teaching, preaching, and healing.

It seems clear to me from that verse in John and from the other places in Matthew where Jesus instructs His followers, like Matthew 28:19, that Jesus is adamant that those who follow Him will do what He did. We are those people. We are the church—the God-ordained instrument of Jesus following His ascension for the redemption of the world. My point is a simple one: what was true of the delivery system of Jesus must also be true of the delivery system for the church. The church is sent to teach, preach, and heal.

So in what ways does the church teach, preach, and heal?

Let's think about teaching first. The idea of Sunday School and small groups is vital to the ministry of the gospel, as are Bible studies, mentoring ministries, youth and children's ministry, podcasts, and blogs. All of these ministries and more represent the teaching arm of the church. Sermons are not unimportant, but sermons represent a very small segment of time and a very limited selection of scripture over the course of a year. It is the teaching ministry that has the potential to get deeply into the hearts and minds of our people. Jesus clearly calls His followers to enter into a whole-life, daily kind of discipleship.

Though worship services play a role in that discipleship, followers of Jesus are rarely formed or transformed by worship services alone. In fact, my experience is that those people who enter into a discipleship or teaching setting are most often more mature as believers, more passionate about Christ, more content in their faith journey, and more likely to stay connected to the church for the long haul. When our church ordains deacons, we often hear our general superintendent say something like “Take thou authority, teach the word!” If Jesus were present in the flesh, I believe He would say a hearty “Amen!” The delivery system of the gospel for Jesus was teaching. It is the same for the church.

But teaching wasn't Jesus' only method. He also preached according to Matthew 4:23 and 9:35. The Sermon on the Mount was without question the most powerful example of Jesus' preaching recorded in the New Testament. Every pastor, at one time or another, has probably tackled a sermon series on Matthew 5 through 7. As I write, at least two Formation Groups in my local church have taken up the Sermon on the Mount as their study material for this quarter. I'm thrilled! It is in the preaching of Jesus that we catch the depth and breadth of the message of Christ's kingdom. We struggle to wrap our minds around the implications of this counter-cultural message. Any time at all spent seriously studying this sermon reminds us that following Jesus demands our complete allegiance. There is simply no confusing the exclusivity of Jesus' call to embrace His Kingdom to the exclusion of any other kingdom on earth. Preaching offers us the opportunity to rehearse and reinforce the kinds of people Jesus is calling us to become. It is in that corporate setting that we all, under the power of the Holy Spirit, collectively affirm that the Kingdom Jesus proclaimed is our Kingdom and that the people around us are our companions for the journey. It was in the preaching ministry of Jesus that He seemed to cast a wide net and invite many to follow Him. It seems clear that this method is still the practice of effective churches today.

Teaching and preaching both seem native to our churches, but this third delivery system of Jesus is a challenge to us. In what ways can the church embrace Jesus' healing ministry? That's a great question and one we turn our attention to now.

We certainly still believe in God's power to heal. Probably in many of our churches, no prayer is prayed more often than prayers for the healing and help of the sick. This is good and fitting. Jesus has invited us to pray and to seek His healing touch. But is there more to the healing ministry of the church? I contend that there is. It is often the ministries of compassion and healing that minister most immediately to the needs of people in our communities. Recently my wife was hospitalized, and it changed my perspective on the healing arm of the church. Every card received, every phone call or text of concern, every bouquet of flowers, and every visit from a caring friend seemed evident in her recovery. It was almost like watching a wilted flower come back to life as the compassionate contacts of our church family began. We may not have the power to heal in and of ourselves, but in the acts of compassion we show and in the prayers of faith we pray, the church faithfully embraces the healing ministry of Jesus.

Recalling the words of Jesus in John 20:21, it makes sense, then, that the church is sent “as” the Father sent the Son. In other words, the role of the church is to carry on the work of Jesus.

Years ago I came across a clever analogy that might set up the final step in understanding Jesus' delivery system and its modern-day implications.

“This is a story about four people named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody. There was an important job to be done, and Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about that, because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought Anybody could do it, but Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn't do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody, when Nobody did what Anybody could have done.”

-Author Unknown

I think it is not quite enough to acknowledge that sharing the gospel is the job of the church. It's too easy to slip out from under the example of Jesus and simply assume that someone—the church—will carry on the work of Jesus. I'd like to remind us that the work of Jesus must also be accomplished in us, individuals. You and I have a personal responsibility to do as Jesus did.

But what would that look like? What if you're not a teacher or a preacher? We freely acknowledge that we can't heal anyone. How are we supposed to imitate Jesus and His system of delivery? I'm glad you asked.

### III. True for the Church, True for Me

To begin, it helps to remember that the New Testament idea of church was not so much an organization as it was a movement. *Ecclesia* is the Greek word most often translated as church in the New Testament (see Matthew 16:18), and movements are always about people. Consider the gospel to be the grassroots movement of God's purposes. Discipleship guru Bill Hull often says of the gospel "Think saints, not steeples." My point is that the church is made up of people. If the gospel is to go forward, it will be because people, not an organization, carry that burden and mobilize. We, you and I, are sent. We are ultimately the delivery system for the good news.

Not a teacher? Are you sure? Are you a parent? Are you a friend? Are you a teammate? In a sense, all of us are teachers. Each of us can probably remember a time when we did our very best to help someone understand something that we were passionate about. We taught a few guitar chords to a roommate; we critiqued the golf swing of a friend and then tried to help; we tutored a classmate in algebra. In all of these cases, we assumed the role of teacher even though we might not have been classically qualified. What if we did the same with the gospel? What if an essential part of being sent is not feeling qualified, but instead making ourselves available? What if we reframed teaching not so much as a lecture with rows of chairs filled with eager students but instead as sharing a cup of coffee with a friend and at the same time sharing our life in Christ? What if the people already in our lives are the people that Jesus is nudging us toward? In this sense, couldn't we embrace the teaching ministry of Christ in our own lives?

Couldn't we see ourselves as Christ's delivery system?

Not a preacher? Fair enough. One of the deepest fears most people have is public speaking. I read a survey recently that placed public speaking ahead of death in the order of things people feared the most! What if we considered the essence of preaching the same as Jesus introduced it in Matthew's bookends of 4:23 and 9:35? Jesus was simply proclaiming the good news that God was doing. What if we saw preaching not so much as preparing to exegete a text of scripture but instead decided that our job was to herald or proclaim the places and examples of Jesus' kingdom at work? What if we simply decided to call attention to the kingdom of heaven breaking into our everyday lives and determined to point it out to those close to us? Is that preaching? In a sense it sure is. And what if we added to that a real passion for seeing people with no hope come to discover the hope that we have found in Jesus? In other words, what if we cultivated in our own lives a real passion for evangelism? Would that capture the essence of what Jesus is asking of us regardless of our professions? I think it would.

Not a healer? Not even a doctor or nurse? Are you then exempt from the healing work of Jesus and the church? Not so fast. What if the work of the Spirit of God in the life of the believer was a work of love? What if by the power of the Spirit of God you asked Jesus to nurture within you a heart of compassion? What if Jesus gave you that heart of compassion and you began to see the world through it? Is it possible that the actions prompted by that heart of compassion might in fact be a means of healing? With tongue in cheek, I often quip that one of the best medicines the church can offer is the casserole. In recent days, the foods delivered to our home as my wife recovered were a means of grace to us. Can you shovel snow? Can you sit with a friend while their loved one has surgery? Can you organize a food drive? Can you give your money to help fund a well in a far-off place? Are these not all expressions of compassion and do they not in some sense bring healing? They are... and they do.

My experience is that I often see these gifts at work in the people of God. For what it's worth, I often see them in this particular order: compassion leads to evangelism which leads to discipleship.

If we truly are sent "as" Jesus was sent, then we must take on His method of delivery as well.

## **CLOSING ILLUSTRATION:**

As an awkward youth, I got tall enough that someone handed me a basketball and suggested I play. I loved baseball, but since the someone who handed me the ball was my dad, I acquiesced. I got some cool shoes, some sweet tube socks (it was the mid '70s), and a tank top to reveal my deeply muscled (read: spindly and emaciated) frame. We showed up to the local junior high school where the games would be played, and I was introduced to my coach and teammates. Having never watched much basketball let alone played any, I was pretty confused. The coach told me to guard some kid and so I did. I followed him everywhere... even when we had the ball! That poor child was as bewildered as I was clueless. It was a difficult season to say the least.

I had the appearance and the tools but had no idea what I was supposed to be doing on the floor.

Isn't this the way we feel about the gospel sometimes, if we are brutally honest? We are believers, we are church people, we look the part and the Spirit has clearly equipped us, but we just don't know what we should be doing.

Let's take our cues from Jesus, whose ministry was characterized by teaching, preaching, and healing. We are sent as He was sent. You and I are the delivery system of the gospel with our focus on compassion, evangelism, and discipleship.



NAZARENE  MISSIONS

*“As the Father has sent Me,  
I am sending you.”*

**JOHN 20:21**

*Discover how you can*  
**JOIN THE MOVEMENT**  
*by visiting*

[nazarene.org/missions](https://nazarene.org/missions)