

Fix Your Eyes on Jesus the Sender: "I am sending you."

Focus Passage: John 20:19–23

Larger Context: John's first recorded *appearance* of Jesus to His disciples after His resurrection.

Other Passages Referenced: Genesis 1:27–28; John 12:34; 14:9; Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Colossians 3:10; Galatians 4:4–5a;

Sermon Recap

In John 20:19–23, Jesus makes it clear that God had sent Jesus. Jesus was going to send His disciples, and Jesus was going to send the Holy Spirit to His disciples to live in them. The key distinction in this great commission text and those in the other gospels and Acts is the way Jesus described the disciples' mission with "As the Father has sent me, even so, I am sending you." It is necessary to understand how God the Father sent Jesus in order to understand how Jesus sends us as His disciples.

God the Father demonstrated that He is a sending God in His first commandment written on the first pages of the Bible (Gen 1:27–28). God created the first human being in His image in a state of shalom—universal flourishing in all of their relationships. In that ideal state, God sent His image-bearing people to fill the earth with His image. When the first humans were deceived and chose to do what they desired rather than what God had told them ... shalom was shattered. Curses replaced shalom. Death intruded into life.

Before God could accomplish His creation plan to fill the earth with His glory through humans created in His image, He would first have to redeem and restore His image in fallen humans. Jesus, God the Son, was the perfect image of God who saved from sin all those who would turn from their sin and trust Him as Savior and King. The central mission of Jesus was to sacrifice His life to save sinners. After his sacrificial death on the cross and resurrection from the dead, Jesus ascended into the heavens while witnesses watched.

Ten days after Jesus ascended to heaven, on the Day of Pentecost, the Father and the Son sent the Holy to live in, empower, and unite Jesus' disciples as the Church—the ekklesia—the assembly of those called out for a special purpose. It was these Jesus sent out in accordance with the Father's mission to make Himself known in all the earth through human image-bearers. As Jesus' disciples, He sent them out on His mission of making disciples.

The Big Idea: God has a mission ... God's mission has a Church ... God's Church makes disciples. Three aspects of our being created in God's image are that we share his ability to think, love, and make choices. We have minds, emotions, and wills. Each of those faculties was disfigured by sin so that we no longer reflect God's image with clarity. The Holy Spirit in us is working to conform us to the likeness of Jesus (Rom 8:29). A growing disciple can be defined as someone who is learning to think like Jesus thinks ... love like Jesus loves, and submit to God's will like Jesus submitted to God's will.

We are totally dependent on the Holy Spirit to restore God's image in us. We can no more make those changes in ourselves than a tree can move the wind. Yet, we make every effort as we ask the Spirit to change us into the people God created us to be. What is your next step in growing as a disciple and disciple-maker of Jesus? Where does God want to change how you think, how you love, and how you submit to Him? What do you think your next step in following Jesus is? Will you take that step?

Group Gathering

Group Check-in — Care, Celebration, Encouragement (About 1/3 of meeting time)

1. Informal conversation to allow individuals to catch up with one another.
2. Ask if anyone would share how they've been hearing and obeying God's direction.

Allow the Word to Speak — Be Hearers of the Word (About 1/3 of meeting time)

READ John 20:19–23

1. What from the passage or sermon was most impactful to you?
2. Were you left with any questions or confusion about the passage or sermon?
3. On what day of the week did the event of John 20:19–23 occur? How do you find that significant?
4. Read Matthew 5:1–48. Then list ways Jesus taught people how their thinking needs to change to align with God's Kingdom. Especially note the times Jesus says, "You have heard it said But I say to you"

Put the Word into Practice — Be Doers of the Word (About 1/3 of meeting time)

1. What do you think about the notion that growth in discipleship has more to do with growth in thinking, loving, and submitting like Jesus than it does about acquiring knowledge of the Bible and theology? Do you think knowledge of the Bible and theology plays a lesser or greater role for you in learning to think, love, and submit like Jesus?
2. Of the topics you listed from Matt 5:1–48 where Jesus called for a new way of thinking, where did your thinking most align with what Jesus taught? What are some ways your thinking may need to change in order for you to think more like Jesus thinks?
3. How would you describe Jesus' love for you? How do you see the Holy Spirit producing that kind of love in you for others?
4. Can you share a brief testimony of how you were blessed when you submitted your will to God's will, even though your own will wanted to go in a different direction? ... Is there a particular area in your life where you are struggling to submit to God's word and will? Will you invite group members to encourage you and pray about that with you?
5. Use "A Disciple's Prayer" in your daily time of Bible reading and prayer to ask the Holy Spirit to restore God's image in you where it has been disfigured by sin.

The Big Question: What do you sense God's Spirit saying to you and what concrete action will you take in response? Share your answer with the group or another trusted Christian and ask them to pray for you.

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES: Click [here](#) for some good opportunities.

“A Disciple’s Prayer”

Lord God, thank you for being a sending God who sent Jesus to save me. Thank you for sending others to tell me about You. Thank you for sending the Spirit to restore Your image in me. Thank you for placing me in Your Church as Your redeemed and sent people.

Make me a disciple who thinks like Jesus thinks, loves like Jesus loves, and submits to the Father like Jesus did. Renew my mind so that I may have the mind of Christ. Even more than wanting right thoughts about Jesus, change me so that more and more I think like Jesus thinks.

Give me both the discipline and the desire to saturate my soul in God’s words. Like Jesus, I want to speak what I hear the Father saying. Imprint the character and acts of Jesus in my memory so that I do what I see Jesus doing.

Make me constantly mindful of how You have loved me, before I ever thought about loving You. Empower me to love others the way Jesus has loved me, whether they love me in return or hate me.

Bend my will, and break it if you must, until I earnestly desire to submit to you like Jesus did. I confess that often I know what Jesus taught, but I do not obey it. Empower me to be a doer of the word and not just a hearer. When I have the urge to control things my way and to avoid the cost of discipleship, enable me to honestly cry out, “Not my will, but thy will be done. Your Kingdom come on earth and in my life as it is in heaven.”

I admit that the task of being and making disciples is overwhelming. In my own strength I simply cannot do it. As you make me a disciple-maker, deliver me from both performance anxiety and self-righteousness. As the Father and Spirit lived through Jesus, fill me with your Spirit. Mold me more and more into Jesus’ likeness so that those who see me will be drawn to Him.

Make yourself known through the image-bearing faithfulness of Your Church until the day the earth will be filled with Your glory as the waters cover the seas.

In the name of the Sending Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

Amen

Church = ekklesia

Ekklesia literally means

“those who are called out of”

The ekklesia was an assembly of people who were called together for a specific purpose.

The Big Idea: God has a mission
...God's mission has a Church
...God's Church makes disciples

**“So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.
And God blessed them.
And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful
and multiply and fill the earth
and subdue it ...’”**

Genesis 1:27–28

**God has a mission to fill the earth
with His glory by filling the earth
with human beings who faithfully
reflect His image**

The Mission of God

a. God the Father sends the Son

b. The Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit

c. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

send the Church to make disciples

of all peoples in all the earth

**“But when the fullness of time had come,
God sent forth his Son, born of woman,
born under the law, to redeem those
who were under the law”**

Galatians 4:4-5a

Jesus as the Image of God

- a. **“And Jesus cried out, ‘Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. And whoever sees me sees him who sent me.’”** *(John 12:44-45)*
- b. **“Whoever has seen me has seen the Father”** *(John 14:9)*
- c. **“He is the image of the invisible God”**
(Colossians 1:15)

The Image of Christ in disciples

- a. “...put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator” *(Col 3:10)*
- b. “we are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit” *(2 Cor 3:18)*
- c. predestined to be conformed to the image of His son” *(Rom 8:29)*

This is my working definition of a disciple who is growing in Christ's likeness:

“someone who increasingly thinks like Jesus thinks, loves like Jesus loves, and submits to God's will like Jesus submitted to God's will.”

“Trees don’t move the wind.”

Ed Stetzer