

Go! Missions
Session 1 – The Sacrifice of Being Sent
Hebrews 13:13 (The Message)



Key Verse: “So let’s go outside, where Jesus is, where the action is.” Hebrews 13:13 (The Message)

Introduction

This passage from Hebrews 13 begs us to ask the question, where is Jesus acting? And how can we be a part of the action? This is particularly an interesting question in the context of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, a denomination that is intent on figuring out ways to minister in a global church. Where is Jesus, and where is the action in the CP Church? Quiet simply, the answer to that is: ALL OVER THE WORLD. Which brings us to our final emphasis: Missions.

ASK - *What is missions? How would you define it?* (Gather answers from the group)
Some verses on missions that you can reference: Matthew. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; Mark 16:15; Psalm 96:3

A working definition:

Missions can simply mean being “sent out into the world to proclaim our faith.” This definition hinges on the action of being sent. Dr. Guder, a theologian and former professor at Princeton Seminary coined the term, “Missional.” At the heart of his theology is the idea that we, as a Christian community, are gathered together, built up in the faith, and SENT OUT. A missional church is a church that recognizes its identity as a church that is sent out. Missional is a term that can be adopted and implemented by anyone. All Christians should be sent out.

But this definition becomes more complicated within a global denomination, because we have missionaries whose job it is to cross a cultural barrier to proclaim Jesus’ saving life, death, and resurrection. While the church is missional, we are not all missionaries (not in vocation, anyway). Let’s be clear about this: we are **ALL** sent out to proclaim the Gospel. But, missionaries are those who cross a cultural barrier (different customs, language, and traditions) to share the Gospel.

This study will be two-fold: we will spend some time talking about our “sentness.” We will talk about that as a part of our identity as Christians. And, we will also talk about the missionaries we have in the CP Church, and remember to pray for them and to promote their ministries.

Our “Sent-ness”

ASK – *What does it mean to be sent out? What kind of practices do we need in place before we are sent out? Are we sent out alone, or together?*
(Gather answers from the group)

We are sent out to a world in which we don't belong. We are foreigners in it, as we belong to God's Kingdom first. With that in mind, we must remember that being sent out into this world will be hard. We are sent out into this world because people need to know God.

LOOK AT THE following passages that speak about our "sentness" and how we must be different from the world.

READ John 15:18-20; 26-27

Discussion Questions:

- *What world do we belong to? Rather, whose world do we belong to?*
- *How are we supposed to be sent out to proclaim the Gospel in a world that "hates" us?*
- *What is meant by the word "hate?"*
- *How does the Spirit help us be sent out into the world?*

READ Matthew 19: 29-30

Discussion Questions:

- *What does this passage mean in regards to our task of being sent out into the world?*
- *How do we leave our families for God's sake?*
- *What sacrifices have you, personally, made in order to proclaim the Gospel in the world?*

Being sent out into this world requires great sacrifice. After all, we serve a God who sent His only Son to Earth to die for us and to redeem us of our sins. We are sent by the same God who sent his only Son.

What sends us out to proclaim the Gospel is the truth that we must love the way God wants the world to be loved.

Conclusion

There is a difference between Missions and Missional. We are all to be missional, or sent out, to our surrounding communities, both near and far. And as a CP Church, we have missionaries, or people whose vocation it is to cross cultural barriers and proclaim the Gospel. In this lesson, we looked particularly at the cost of being sent out. It isn't easy. It requires sacrifice. But the sacrifice is worth it because being sent out to proclaim the Gospel means that we are working to love the world the way God sees it.

See the instruction sheet for Lectio Divina, a form of prayer. If you have time, you might want to try this form of prayer. If time is limited, simply close the session in prayer. Invite prayer requests.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, You sent your Son to give us a glimpse of Your Heavenly Kingdom. And you send us out in the same way to proclaim your Gospel and serve your people. Send us out with your Holy Spirit and teach us to love the world as you see it. In Jesus name, Amen.

Closing Prayer Exercise*

Lectio Divina is a form of prayer that teaches us to pay close attention to God's Word. It is a prayer exercise that depends on "a close reading of the text."

How it works: The participants are invited to find a comfortable place to sit and listen. They may keep a journal or make notes. They may also simply sit with nothing and eyes closed. The leader will read the same text out loud three times, slowly and carefully. After the first reading, they will prompt the class with several questions, leaving lots of room for silence so that the class can think about the text. The leader will read the text 2 more times for the class, each time prompting with different questions, and leaving a time a silence for quiet reflection.

First Reading

READ Luke 18:18-30 slowly and carefully. Wait a couple of minutes before speaking again.

Leader: *As you meditate on this passage, think about the word or phrase that sticks out to you. Think about why it sticks out to you.*

After a moment of silence: If you feel comfortable, please share just your word or phrase out loud.

Second Reading

READ Luke 18:18-30 slowly and carefully. Wait a couple of minutes before speaking again.

Leader: *Put yourself in the story of this text. Who are you in the story? What do you see? What do you hear?*

Third Reading

READ Luke 18:18-30 slowly and carefully. Wait a couple of minutes before speaking again.

Leader: *As you heard it this third time, think about what the sacrifice of being sent out to this world looks like? What sacrifice is God asking you to make in order to GO! and serve.*

Fourth Reading

READ Luke 18:18-30 slowly and carefully. Wait a couple of minutes before speaking again.

Leader: *In this final reading, imagine you are having a conversation with Jesus. What is he telling you to do? What is he telling your church to do?*

*(This prayer exercise can be shortened or expanded depending on how much time you have left. If you don't have much time, feel free to only read it once or twice. If you have plenty of time left, make sure to leave a lot of space for silence during the exercise. The more time and silence you can devote to it, the more you will get out of the text. Additionally, this prayer exercise can be used with any Biblical text as a prayer-tool.)

Once you have finished Lectio Divina, feel free to ask the class if there is anything they'd like to share in response to the close reading of the text and the theme of the sacrifice it takes to be sent out.