

VII. Project Andrew

Bring Them to Him

“Sent to Bring”

John 20:19-23

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March 19, 2023 • Sunday Morning Sermon

This is the Word of God. John 20:19-23 says [19] *On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.”* [20] *When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.* [21] *Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me, even so I am sending you.”* [22] *And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.* [23] *If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.”*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

One of my greatest fears in coming to Alabama about 25 years ago, is that I know nothing about hunting or fishing and I think everybody here does. I knew this when I was at Briarwood Christian School and I overheard some girls talking about getting their first deer. So I knew I was at a place where hunting and fishing were a premium. For me, it was just baseball, basketball, football, and then a little bit later, golf and that was pretty much it. People used to ask me ‘Didn’t your family go on camping trips?’ Are you kidding me? I mean, honestly, roughing it for my family in the sixties was a Howard Johnson’s with a black and white television. We would have had no idea of anything like that.

Here is what I do know. Upon a lake or sea or in the ocean, when the storms arrive and the winds rise up, the ship is battered, for I've seen enough movies to know this if nothing else, all of the maritime experts will say things like this; shore up the lines, fix the main sail, tighten the lines, batten down the hatches. I know what they're doing for I have enough sense to know that they are saying they are in a storm and this is not the time for sophistication and ingenuity. Go to the foundations and secure them – the line, the mainsail, the hatches, the rudder, fix it, hold it, secure it.

My dear brothers and sisters, our Lord warned us that from His ascension until His coming, His church, that glorious battleship of redemption, sailing through the seas of this world, will be battered. He tells us we're going to face tribulation. If they persecuted Me, how much more will they persecute you? (John 15:20) Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you (Matthew 5:11). In this culture, unless the invasion of God's common grace that restrained sin or God's redeeming grace that transformed sinners intervenes, then this depravity will always move to absolute depravity, and the object of rebellion against God will be focused upon those who bear witness of God, His church and His people. As it has come, we live in a culture that calls evil good, calls darkness light, assaults the helpless for the sake of promoting sexual anarchy, assaults the helpless in the womb, for the sake of ease, assault the helpless at the end of life. And now, with its sexual obsessions, mutilates and assaults the adolescents of life for their own experimentations.

In the midst of all of this, there is a rising, welcoming hatred of the Almighty. In other words, sinful men will be sinful men apart from the grace of God and those of us who feel that in our culture at the moment is not directly upon our lives, but certainly many of our brothers and sisters are feeling it in their livelihoods. In the midst of that, what do we do? I believe with all my heart, is that while I love the ingenuity, the insights, the wisdom and the just the marvelous brilliance I meet in many of my colleagues in ministry and in many of you, the answer is found in the foundations.

It is at moments like this, you fix the rudder, you set the trajectory, you go to the foundations and by God's grace, for His glory and with His power, stay on mission, stay on message, and stay in ministry. Dare I say, this year, we have not only said as the embassy of the Kingdom of God, His church, as the bride of Christ in this world, as the army of the Lord, as the dwelling place of God, His gathered people, it is important more than ever, that the foundations are secured, sure and we stand firm.

One of the most encouraging moments of my life happened yesterday. I had the privilege to marry a young couple that had come to Christ and it was just a great blessing. As I finished the wedding, I said, "The Lord bless you, and I'm looking forward to how He's going to use you two in life." They said, 'We'll see you next week.' I said, "You will be on your honeymoon next week." They said, 'No, aren't you speaking at the Ligonier National Conference?' I said, "Yeah." They said, 'Well, we're going to the Ligonier for our honeymoon.' You know what I did? Touchdown! Praise the Lord. Wow, what a moment! The whole conference is focused upon standing firm.

For the church and for the Christian to stand firm does not mean we stand still. It means we stand firm and that means we stand up and speak out. That means we're in a fight, but we don't fight with the wisdom of the world or the weapons of the world and we don't fight like the world and by God's grace, His church should not look like the world. We fight with the weapons of the Spirit. We fight with the Word of truth. We fight knowing the Lord is our Defender and has won the victory. We fight with the armor of the Lord – the belt of His righteousness, the sword of faith, the helmet of His salvation, our feet moving shod with the Gospel of peace.

Therefore, let's remember this; in this day, here's how you should see it. Don't look at things the way cable news, broadcast news or the world tells you and social media impacts you. Here's how you look; until Christ returns, as I use this word carefully, He has unleashed His church upon a God-glorifying, Christ-exalting, Spirit-filled enterprise to make disciples of all of the nations. This is the mission of our Triune God to the glory of the Father and the exaltation of the Son, who, when He is lifted up, will draw our men to Himself, all by the power of the Spirit who has come to empower us to lift up the Son to the glory of the Father. Our objective is to make disciples of all the nations.

Now what happens? When we do that, by God's grace and for His glory, disciples get turned out. As the church did, that in the very first century, and it began to move out, less than 25 years later, an adversary of the Kingdom of God in this continent of Europe says these people have turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6). But we must remember they did not go out on a mission to turn the world upside down for that was the consequence. They went out on a mission to turn sinners right side up – that's the mission with a glorious, comprehensive message, the whole counsel of God, delivered through four ministries; the ministry of upreach which is worship, the ministry of outreach which is evangelism, the Ministry of inreach which

is shepherding and loving one another and the ministry of downreach which is teaching and disciple making.

He gives this whole thing to us comprehensively, which is where we started for our ministry theme this year. We said we needed to be on mission, on message and in ministry so let's go back to the Great Commission. In the Great Commission He tells us to make disciples, and then He tells us the message – teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you, the whole Bible, to make a whole Christian wrapped in the power of the Gospel message. Then He tells us to go which is evangelism and baptize them – enfold them into the body of Christ as you are loving one another. What do they do when they are discipled? Now, instead of falling short of the glory of God, their duty and their delight is to give glory to God in worship – and they worshiped Him.

Let's get even more focused. Let's look at one of those ministries, that first one. Praise God, when you get to home plate for people worship. Praise God when you get to third base. I had the greatest time while I was away doing this wedding yesterday, for I had my grandson with me and I had the chance to take him to where I saw my very first baseball game when my dad was in the Carolina League. I had the opportunity to tell him that's where I loved the game of baseball from that day forward. Baseball is the best illustration I know for Christianity is like a baseball game. You want to score homeruns, then you have to hit a home run. When people worship, you hit a home run. People can't get to home plate till they get to third base and that's teaching them. They can't get the third base to they get to second base – they have to be enfolded. They can't get to second base until they get to first base where you are called to bring them to Jesus – evangelism. That's been our focus this year.

Then we took a more narrow focus as we looked at a biographical study of evangelism in the life of one Disciple who isn't mentioned much whose name is Andrew, but every time he's mentioned he's bringing people to Jesus – bring them to Him. We see him bring his brother to Jesus. We see him bring a little boy to Jesus. We see him bringing Greeks to Jesus. Bring them to Him is what Andrew does. We saw that not only can we learn from those three encounters of bringing them to Him, but we also find out that Jesus tells us to be praying because we need the Holy Spirit for two reasons. Number one, nobody will come to Jesus unless the Holy Spirit goes with us and before us to give them eyes to see and ears to hear and bring them from death into life. Two, we can't go to them unless the Holy Spirit gives us the power to go to them. We need the Holy Spirit to empower us and to open their eyes and hearts that they may come to Christ.

Our message is glorious. Your sins are forgiven. You are set free from the fear, the guilt, the shame, the domain and the power of sin in Jesus Christ. So today, I want to be very practical. The Great Commission comes at the end of Matthew which is where it's the most instructive. Then it shows up again in Mark, Luke and Acts 1:8 where it says ‘You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the other most part of the world.’ But we also get it in the Gospel of John, and John gives it to us in a text that quotes Jesus on the day of His resurrection. This is the text to go from the expansive Great Commission and now to go to the distillation of the Great Commission as the Father has sent Me, Jesus says, so send I you. This is a text we need to understand.

First of all, we're going to put it in its context. If God allows us to do what He's called us to do, what did these disciples do? What does it mean if we make disciples? If we make disciples, we stay on that focus mission to make disciples with that comprehensive message, we

turn out disciples who have a comprehensive mission – disciples who take every thought captive unto the obedience of Christ, who are the salt of the earth, and a light to the world so that He Christ, might have preeminence in all things. They are sent into the world out of the salt shaker into the world – bushel basket removed, light to the world, a mind now alive in Christ, taking every thought captive, a purpose in life, not the amassing of the gilded toys of dust that this world offers, but that Christ might have preeminence in all things. Our Lord makes that clear on the first day of resurrection. He is resurrected and He makes His appearances.

A few studies from now we'll go further in this. I would posit, Christ makes 13 appearances between His resurrection and His ascension. They're recorded in the Gospels, in the Epistles and some of them are in Jerusalem and some in the Galilee. Everybody's told to go check with the witnesses. 30 years later, the Apostle Paul encourages people to go check with the 500 in Galilee and ask them about it. So here is this historical event of the resurrection and in this resurrection, the first day is jam filled with appearances. He appears to women, then He appears to one woman, Mary Magdalene. He appears to disciples, then He appears to one, Peter and then He appears to two more on the road to Emmaus. Then He appears to all of them in the Upper Room.

The Upper Room is what I call the epicenter of Christianity. I take people to the land of Israel. I've done a lot of study to try to locate that area. I know there's a traditional site and I think the traditional sites very close, but it's the epicenter. He appears to them as we just read. John 20:19-20 says [19] *On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."* [20] *When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.*

The first day of the week here is the Lord's Day, which accommodates the creation Sabbath, where we rest from our work and proclaim to the Christian Sabbath, where we rest from our sins in the righteousness and atoning work of Christ. Here it's obvious they went from sad to glad but there's even more here. They have gone to this Upper Room out of fear, their fear driven isolation. The disciples were in a self-imposed, fearful lockdown. They had locked the door. By the way, isn't that interesting – how the anger of men and the fear of men causes us to do rather stupid things, as if that door locked could protect them, but why would you lock a door when Jesus had said on the third day, "I will rise"? Their fear had so dominated them that the words Jesus kept repeating to them of 'on the third day I will rise,' they're not even thinking about. They're thinking about self-preservation locked behind the door in an upper room. A locked door which can't protect them, yet they're not even thinking about the One who went to the cross to deliver them and this is the day of His resurrection. They've even started getting reports from others, the women, Mary Magdalene, that He has risen but the door is still locked, which comes from the foolishness and imbecility that the anger of man and the fear of man brings. There is where Christ comes.

By the way, they've already been to this Upper Room. It was in this Upper Room that Jesus did the last Passover that was sending Him to the cross, the Passover lamb and instituted the first Lord's Supper that will remind us in the New Covenant meal of what He has done on the cross. They will be coming back to this place after the ascension. It is in this place that the Holy Spirit, not in symbol, but in fact is going to be poured out upon them and Pentecostal powers come to infill the body of Christ, His church, so that we can be on mission, on message and in ministry. It is in this place also that the selection of the one to replace Judas will take place. The church is born in and out of this place as they will go preach the Word at the

Temple Mount and 3000 are going to come to Christ. This is the epicenter of Christianity in this room, and Jesus comes there on the night of the resurrection on that first day.

One of my favorite services, every Lord's day is Lord's Day evening worship. Now they're there not by attendance desire, but by out of fear, but Jesus still comes to them and in this Upper Room they are assembled, except Thomas. I don't know where Thomas was. I don't know what he was doing, but he wasn't there. Jesus is going to call the second service next week and Thomas is going to be there then. By the way, every preacher, we go through this every Sunday – where's Thomas tonight? We have all kinds of Thomas' on Sunday night that we can't find and we don't know where they are.

On this first night on the day of resurrection the others were there and Thomas missed the blessing they received that night from Jesus. As soon as Jesus walked in, He says "Shalom Aleichem" which to them was a natural greeting. This is the traditional greeting. It means 'peace be with you.' That would be normal, but then He does something abnormal. He turns the traditional greeting into a benediction by repeating it the second time – peace be with you. They can't miss it for in this same room just days earlier, when He had instituted the Lord's Supper, He said to them, "Peace I give to you, not as the world gives to you. My peace, I give to you, for in the world you will have tribulation, in Me, you have peace. Take courage." Not I will overcome, but I have overcome the world and we have a message of the Gospel of peace by the Prince of Peace.

We have a message that we take to men and women who are doing their best to dismiss the reality of the dominion of sin's guilt, shame, and its eternal condemnation from their minds. They use cover ups, distractions, behavior modifications and man-made religions but it never works. It can't work so we bring to them that which is true. It is Jesus, who is the way, the truth and the life and when you come to Him, the One who came for you, you have peace with God. Romans 5:1 says [1] *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* It is not we might have or if I do good enough I will have peace with God, but when we come to Him, our sins have forgiven, His righteousness clothes us, and we are accepted in the beloved. We who were once condemned are now justified and innocent.

We have peace with God and not only peace with God, we have the peace of God. Philippians 4:6-7 says [6] *do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.* [7] *And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will* (literally stand sentry) *guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.* We can have peace with God and the peace of God. The walls of hostility against Him and one another, He removes as we are united to the Almighty in Christ and with one another in the Lord.

Back to the text, now what do they do after He gives them this benediction? That's what it is, a benediction. We have that benediction moment in our worship services at the end. Now in the early church, when they were just starting out in little houses, the preacher would go around and he'd put his hand on each attendant and give them a word of peace – bene – beneficial, dicte – word – a good word. They would receive it as he laid his hands over them but when you get to 3000 which is just counting the men you would be there all night and all day, just closing the service. So before long, they went to the rabbinical method of the hands up, symbolically touching all, then people as desired, lift their hand up to receive it. The hands facing the people from the preacher and the hands opened toward God to receive the good word from God.

The benediction is not a prayer. We have multiple prayers of invocation, supplications, and intercessions. It is not our word to God in intercession. It is God's revealed Word to His people. The good Word secured for His people in Christ. Peace be with you. Then those of you who have been brought to Him, have come to Him, now He sends you to bring others to Him as the Father sent Him so He sends you. Here we see the distillation of the Great Commission – as the Father sent Him. We don't have to wonder what it means to be sent by the Father? Jesus said, 'It's my delight to do your will' (Luke 22:42). Then Jesus repeatedly tells us why the Father sent Him for it was to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). When He went to the cross, He saved the lost.

Now He is sending us to the lost to seek them in the highways, byways, hedges, villages, towns, homes and all over. We have been told by Jesus to go into the whole world, to preach this Gospel, go throughout the entirety of humanity, because His people are not coming from one covenanted nation in the land of promise. They are coming from every nation into the royal nation of God's elect, Jew and Gentile. Now not to a down payment of the Kingdom of God in the land of promise, but to a new heavens and a new earth in which Christ will reign. Go, you are to be on that mission to seek and to bring the lost whom I save. Just as the Father gave Christ the Holy Spirit in the Virgin's womb, to His baptism, to the wilderness, throughout Galilee in His teaching, so also the Holy Spirit accompanied Him to the Cross, who brought Him out of the tomb and received Him into the Shekinah glory, the clouds of glory into the heavens. He now sends from the heavens to us, to give the object lesson to His disciples as He does it right here.

This is what I think is happening at this moment. He gives them an object lesson of what He's going to do 40 days from now, when He pours forth His spirit and the wind and breath of God infills His church for the mission, receiving power to be His witness. Now, in this embryonic moment in this Upper Room where it will happen in fulfillment, He gives it in symbol as He breathes, and so declares the Spirit of God whom the Father gave Me, I will give to you. This mission is glorious. There's nothing like it when you fulfill this mission with this message and take the Gospel to the lost, for you are unleashing the power of the Gospel. And everywhere you preach it, men and women are going to have their sins forgiven, but if you're silent, they have no hope.

Jesus is not going to lose any of His elect. The question is not if we don't go and do this, will God get it done? No, God will get it done. The question is, will He do it through us or are we on the sideline? He will get it done. If He needs to, He could raise up a rock to do it. I mean, He uses donkeys as He did with Balaam's donkey (Numbers 22:22-34). That's a good encouragement for us preachers. He can raise up praise and proclamation from a rock. But He has commissioned us with this message and this ministry to go as He came to seek and to save the lost and we can't do it without Him so He tells us He will be with us to the end of the age. He puts His Spirit upon us and in this text, 40 days from this day, the Spirit of God is going to fill up His church and send us into the world. As we go into the world, men and women in the bondage of sin are going to be set free when they hear that a Savior has gone to Calvary to die for your sins to set you free from guilt, shame and the reality of a place called hell and condemnation that is irrevocable which is where sinners are headed. But God can bring you to Himself in Jesus and bring you to glory. That's what we're here for and why we live and everything else is consumed and subsumed in this mission and this message – that we are sent as the Father has sent the Son.

Here is your take away. We seek Him to bring them to Him because He's the only One who can and surely will save them. Somebody brought us to Him. He now sends us to bring others to Him, to bring the lost to Him and He is the only One who can save them. How can we be silent? How can we be passive? How can we, in the name of standing firm, stand still? Will we not go to seek and to save the lost?

I can't improve on what my dear friend Randy Pope, has been doing now for about three decades so I'll let you know what that is. He says 'I'm inviting you to the GBI, not the FBI, the GBI – greet, befriend, invite.' Let's go seek the lost, and bring them to Him, how? Greet them. What did Jesus do? Did He ignore those who were in lock down out of fear? He went and greeted them with a message, Good news, Peace be with you. He didn't berate them. That's one of the great challenges. We greet and befriend sinners, not sin. No, we hate sin and we're going to kill sin, but we greet and befriend sinners, even those who might be called traitors to the Almighty. There's something different about us. Jesus overcame an obstacle, a locked door to get to them. So do we. We pursue sinners to exalt Christ to them, and that means we befriend them. Why? Because Jesus has befriended us. Jesus is a friend to sinners. So are we. Jesus lover of my soul. Then we invite them. It's what Jesus does, isn't it? Come and see, come, He says. Come to Me all who are weary and heavy laden, for I'll give you rest for your soul. Invite them to Him.

You may be thinking 'they may not want to.' Then, start this way. Invite them to the next Lord's Day and let them sit next to you and hear Him. Let them see Him in His people, hear Him in His Words, sung, read and preached. Invite them. If you're thinking they won't come then invite them again. Would you like to know how many times didn't pack a suit and took my shorts to Augusta, Georgia, knowing my granddaddy was going to invite me to church and I wanted to make sure I didn't had the clothes to go? That didn't stop him. So, keep inviting them – invite them to that Sunday school community where they can even hear and see more, invite them to that small group Bible study that you go to. Where's the empty chair where we're reminded who will be invited to fill this one next week. Invite them into your home.

Do you remember a tax collector that got saved named Zacchaeus? Do you remember that tax collector who got saved who became a disciple named Matthew also called Levi? What did they do? They threw a party and they invited sinners. They didn't throw a party for sinners. They threw the party for Jesus. Go read Matthew 5:27-32. He threw the party for Jesus and invited anyone and everyone even to compel them to come. Keep inviting them. Be like the woman searching for the coin. She got on her knees. She lit a light. She used a broom, increasing her intensity. Invite them by God's grace, and for His glory, just keep inviting them. When they come, listen, you can hear the applause of heaven where the angels rejoice when one sinner comes to Christ by faith in repentance (Luke 15:10).

Here we are in a society, a sin tossed broken world, where the anger of men is just so shrouding us, penetrating us, where Satan is infiltrating with false theologies into His church, where the behavior of worldliness is penetrating the church and then outside the church, if possible, it's worse. There's divisiveness, self-absorption, the anger of man, the chaos of evil, the pressing shrouds of darkness descending into such a world and instead of penetrating the church, is there a place where the Gospel of peace reigns? Is there a place where the deliverance of sin and its consequences is seen and experienced?

Is there a gathering of God's people on a Lord's Day where something is different, where we find rest for our souls and we can bring others to Him, who is our rest? Is there a place where from every stormy wind that blows, from every swelling tide of woes, is there a

place that's a calm and sure retreat? Is there a place secured by His mercy seat? Is there a place where Jesus sheds the oil of gladness upon our heads? Is there a place that's all more sweet? Is it a place that is secured by the blood bought mercy seat? Is there a place where the scenes of spirits and people blend and friends hold fellowship with friends? Is there a place where those sundered in the world by faith these people meet around only one mercy seat? Is there a place where we can on eagle's wings soar where time and sense seem no more? Is there a place where heaven comes down on our souls to greet and mercy, glory and grace crowns the mercy seat?

Could that also be in your homes where they could be invited in like a Matthew and the Zacchaeus? Is it not in the gathering of God's people on the Lord's Day and the gathering of a family on any day where we can invite those whom we greet and befriend to meet Jesus? Let's pray.

Prayer:

Take a few moments in silent prayer. We get to bring people to Jesus because Jesus sends them to us. Would you pray that God would grant us to be such a place where they could meet Jesus? We want this to be a place where the gladness dwells just as gladness dispelled their sadness in that Upper Room. We want this to be a place where divisiveness, the anger of men, the cacophony of sin is dispelled, and in the gathering of God's people, even within our homes, is a place where they can meet Jesus. This week whom will we greet, befriend and invite? May it be from our classmates, teammates, neighbors, friends, officemates that we will greet with respect, dignity, befriend with the Good News of peace with God and the peace of God and invite them to meet Him. Send us Savior, in Jesus' Name, Amen.