



“Our Journey: Our Journey to Share Good News”

Text: John 20:19-31

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March 31, 2013

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH - EVANSVILLE, INDIANA

Have you ever had the experience of wanting to share some good news? You get all excited and you just can't wait to share what you know. The news is so good that you can't believe that you know it. And just when it comes time to tell the world what you know, you discover that everyone already knows what you know.

In an earlier time, before the advent of satellite technology, in order to know something that happened on the other side of the world, a telegram would be sent. Some of you remember telegrams. Try explaining it to someone who has never lived in a world that doesn't have the internet. Try explaining it to someone who has never lived without a cell phone.

Before the telegraph, in our country, the Pony Express carried messages from one town to another. If you wanted to get a message from St. Joseph, Missouri to Sacramento, California, the Pony Express made it possible for that message to be delivered in 10 days. Each Pony Express rider rode about 75 miles a day.

And if you go all the way back, the only way that news traveled was by messenger on foot. Someone literally carried the news from one place to another and shared what had happened someplace far away.

But now, all news travels fast. That's become the case with the advent of social media and blogging and instant messaging and texting. There's hardly any need to watch the news or read a newspaper. It seems like everyone knows everything thirty seconds after it happens. We know what happens on the other side of the world in less than a minute. Now, all news travels fast.

When Jesus gathered with his disciples on that Easter evening long ago, there was nothing resembling the mass communication available to us. Jesus had eleven disciples and one of them wasn't at the meeting. If anyone beyond their circle was to know anything of the resurrection, or the message of the good news, it would be the task of the disciples to make it known. They would be the ones to share the good news.

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." Sent. "I send you." With those three words, the disciples became apostles. They were no longer students. Now they were those who were sent. Now they were messengers.

Empowered by the Spirit, Jesus sent the disciples into the world to share the good news that God is love, that God loves the world, that everyone can have a fresh start, and that all the dividing walls that we built between us and God and between us and each other, have been torn down. Jesus sent the disciples into the world to tell all people that the life God created us to live can be summed up in two phrases: "Love God and love your neighbor." "As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

That commission is still in effect. Jesus still sends those who are his disciples into the world to share the good news. It is part of the journey of every believer. It is not an option. We are to share the good news of God's love. We are to take the good news of new life to those who have yet to hear and believe. We are to take the good news of hope and joy to those locked in despair and gloom. We are to take the good news of God's love for all people into the world and watch the difference that knowledge will make. "As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

One of the five challenge goals of the "Our Journey" campaign is to find new and effective ways of taking the good news into the world and implementing them. We want to share the good news we have received for ourselves with those who are still searching for good news. We know they are out there. We know that there are those who are looking for good news, but they're looking for it in all the wrong places. We know that there are those who have been hurt by past church experiences and still want to find a place where they can be welcomed and included in a congregation's life. We know that there are those who are looking for a place where faith and

life do not require checking their brains at the door. We know that those people are out there, because some of them – by the grace of God – have found their way in here and they tell us what a difference being part of a church that believes in good news means to them.

The challenge for us is to discover new ways – effective ways – of getting out the word that God’s love is real and there is a place where God’s people gather to celebrate and serve. The challenge for us is to develop new and effective ways to share the good news in ways that help people connect faith and life – as they connect with others on the journey of faith. The challenge for us is to be a church in the 21st century that uses the vast variety of resources available to us to share the hope and joy that is ours in Jesus Christ.

And let’s take just a moment to be clear. Jesus did not say, “Go into all the world and find those people who can do you good and make them disciples.” Jesus did not commission us to find those who can help us meet the financial challenges of being a church. Jesus did not commission us to make disciples of those who are in powerful positions and can help us leverage that power to our advantage. Jesus did not tell us to make disciples just so we can be the biggest church in town. Jesus did not even say, “Go into all the world and make Presbyterians of all nations.” If those unworthy motivations creep into our thinking and behavior, anything we do to share good news will fail miserably.

No, Jesus sends us to share the good news. Jesus sends us to share food with the hungry, water with the thirsty, clothes with the naked, care for the sick, and friendship with the lonely and forgotten. Jesus sends us to take hope to the hopeless, joy to those in distress, and comfort to those who are afflicted. Jesus sends us to share the good news that all are valued and loved and welcomed. Jesus sends us to share the good news because the good news is all that will make a difference in the world and in the lives of the people who call it home.

The old saying was “good news travels fast.” I suppose it still does.

But good news travels only as those who have heard the good news for themselves share it with others. The church – the disciples of Jesus – has received the commission to do what Jesus did – to share good news. We are called to be an “apostolic” church – a church that is sent.

Our journey of faith is a journey to share good news. Our journey of faith is to share the joyous news that Christ is risen and, because he has, life can be new and filled with hope and delight. Our journey of faith is a response to Jesus saying to us: “As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”

For now and evermore. Amen.



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