

Called to Go

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Exodus 4:10-17

But Moses said to the Lord, 'O my Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor even now that you have spoken to your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.' ¹¹Then the Lord said to him, 'Who gives speech to mortals? Who makes them mute or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?' ¹²Now go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you are to speak.' ¹³But he said, 'O my Lord, please send someone else.' ¹⁴Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses and he said, 'What of your brother Aaron the Levite? I know that he can speak fluently; even now he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you his heart will be glad. ¹⁵You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth; and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and will teach you what you shall do. ¹⁶He indeed shall speak for you to the people; he shall serve as a mouth for you, and you shall serve as God for him. ¹⁷Take in your hand this staff, with which you shall perform the signs.'

Acts 13:1-4

Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the ruler, and Saul. ²While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' ³Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. ⁴ So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia; and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

1. Military Service Obligation in Korea

In South Korea, men between the ages of 18 and 35 are supposed to serve in the Korean army. It is mandatory for every male. I began my service during the Vietnam War. The Korean army at the time was participating in the Vietnam War and aiding the US in its efforts in the region. I was concerned about potentially being sent to Vietnam. I was afraid that I would likely die in the field. I couldn't sleep at night and every evening I would go to bed thinking about the war and about dying. But one day, I felt God changed my perspective. I felt like God told me to go and share the good news of Jesus in the Korean army. The following morning, all of my fears disappeared. Even though my service in the Korean army was difficult, I felt a sense of joy having a clear purpose in the military. My mission was not to fight with the communists but to share the love of God with other soldiers.

2. God's Call to Moses

Today's first scripture is about Moses' call and the second is about Paul and Barnabas' call. Let me read again our reading from last week. In Exodus 3:9-10, God says, "**Now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.**" God tells Moses that the Lord has seen the suffering of the Israelites. "So go and deliver them out of Egypt."

Right after Moses heard God's command, Moses says, "Who me? Lord, are you crazy? No way!" Moses continues to argue with the Lord, saying that the people will not believe the Lord appeared to Moses. God shows Moses the miraculous signs by changing Moses' staff into a snake, his hand with leprosy, and the water of the Nile river into blood. Moses makes his final excuse. He says in verse 9, "**I have never been eloquent.**"

When we read the passage, we can see a deeper issue within Moses. Moses has no confidence and says to the Lord, "**Please send someone else... I am slow of speech and slow of tongue**" (4:13). God gets angry and says to Moses, "**What about your brother Aaron the Levite? I know he can speak well.**" Despite Moses' lack of confidence and constant excuses, God lets Moses make no more excuses.

3. God's Call to Paul and Barnabas

Our second passage, Acts 13:1 and following talks about what happened at the church of Antioch. According to Acts 11:19, the church of Antioch was started by the refugees from the persecution that was sparked by the death of Stephen. But the congregation was a mixture of Jews and Gentiles. Antioch was the first place where the believers were called Christians because they overcame racial, cultural, and language barriers being united to follow after Jesus.

Acts 13:2 says, one day "**The Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'**" The term, "to set apart" means to dedicate for a special purpose. God wanted the Antioch church to dedicate Barnabas and Saul for a special mission. This is how Saul and Barnabas started their missionary journey. The two visited key people groups and cultural centers to reach as many people as possible. They went to cities with synagogues, speaking first to the Jews in hopes that they would see Jesus as the Messiah and help spread the gospel to everyone. At the time, the church of Antioch was a new congregation. There would have been so many things the church would hope to accomplish. But when the congregation heard from the Holy Spirit to set aside Barnabas and Saul, they obeyed. The church followed what the Holy Spirit told them.

Barnabas and Paul were like “circuit riders.” In the early Methodist churches, circuit riders were appointed to travel around specific geographic territories to minister to settlers and organize congregations. They did not stay in one location, but would constantly visit different places and people. Each congregation was typically small, and lay people were in charge of the church. Pastors would visit different congregations and would administer baptisms and the holy communions.

The average life expectancy of a Methodist circuit rider was 33 years of age. Of the first 672 preachers whose records were kept in full, in fact, two-thirds of them perished before being able to render 12 years of service. Circuit riders would often ride on horseback for hundreds even thousands of miles to preach the gospel. This is why Methodist churches in the early stage were very similar to mission centers, sending Christians to share the gospel. It is this history that allowed for Koreans to hear the gospel roughly 130 years ago from the Appenzellers, a Methodist couple from New Jersey.

In two weeks, I’m planning to visit Russia with a group of Korean Christians from the Greater Boston Area. We will visit 3rd generation Korean Russian Christians and encourage them and learn how we can help them. I would appreciate it if you would keep me in your prayers. And I pray that God would also allow us to share the good news during our trip with the people we interact with while in Russia.

4. Called to Go

“Called to go” does not mean that we have to go abroad all the time. I am sure you have heard a term “glocalization.” It is a blend of “global” + “localization.” If we apply this concept to our mission, we need to use different methods for different people. St. Paul used such methods when he shared the good news of Jesus Christ. St. Paul says in I Corinthians 9, “***To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews.To those outside the law I became as one outside the law...To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, so that I might by any means save some***” (vv. 20-23). Different people have different needs. So we need to approach people with different methods.

We are going to have a yard sale this Saturday and an open house in October. I believe that these events are kinds of “going.” These types of events help reach those who may not be as comfortable or familiar with church. I’m so grateful for everyone who has helped allow us to have fun and rejoice as a community of believers, while we also reach out and embrace the children and adults living in our community. Through the yard sale and the open house, we will share God’s love.

5. Children's Love for Their Teacher

We are called not only to “go” abroad and go to those in the community, but also to someone who is very near to us. A day before the summer recess, Adriana Lopez, fourth grade teacher in Staten Island, New York, was asked to step into the hall of her public school. She had been diagnosed with breast cancer and faced a long program of chemotherapy and radiation to combat the disease. As she sat down in the hall, the school choir began to sing “I’m gonna love you through it.” The school children wanted to show their solidarity with their teacher in her fight against cancer. They showered her with pink carnations as she expressed her thanks and determination to keep on teaching. She was very encouraged by children’s love. The video is found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=37&v=ITd5pesVjpY.

6. Conclusion

Jesus says to his disciples, **“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”** When Jesus’ disciples went wherever the Holy Spirit led, one third of the world’s population became Christian. As you may know, the Book of Discipline in the United Methodist Church says, **“The mission of the church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”** One question I have for you is, have you ever made a disciple of Jesus Christ? If not, do we know how to make disciples?

My interpretation is that we can’t make disciples. Our job is to baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teach what Jesus did and said. Then Jesus will make them His disciples. In other words, our job is to invite people to Christ by word and deed, and to teach them about Jesus. Before we invite someone to be a disciple of Jesus, is there any way that we can make sure whether we are His disciples or not? John 13:35 says, **“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”** If we have the love of Jesus and love others with His love, we are disciples of Jesus Christ.

7. Application

Everyone is hungry for God’s love. God calls us to go and help people so that they can experience God’s love. Jesus wants us to live as His disciples by loving His people. Revelation 2:7 says, **“Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.”**

Do we hear what the Holy Spirit is saying this morning? May the Holy Spirit help us hear God’s calling. Amen.