

Eastwood Baptist (13/5/'18) **“AS THE FATHER HAS SENT ME”**  
(John’s Gospel)

**Introduction** How did you feel about being sent to do something when you were a young child? I remember that it made me feel important, even if I only had to walk to our corner shop two doors away to buy one small item. On the other hand, it also doesn’t take much to make us feel intimidated when we’re young. But as we get older neither of these feelings is as common. It depends on who sends us and what the task is. So what if the one sending us is Jesus? And what if Jesus has given us a very important task?

**“I am sending you”** (John 20:19-23) ***Read John 20:19-23.***

This is the risen Lord Jesus who pronounces peace upon his disciples, and sends them out. If we are Jesus’ disciples, both parts of this also belong to us. Surely this should make us feel important, although it might also make us feel intimidated. But there is even more going on in this passage than Jesus’ sending of disciples. First, Jesus sends as the Father sent him. This has great implications for discipleship and mission, and I want to focus on this in my sermon. But two other things before I do so. Jesus not only sends but empowers. He gives the Holy Spirit to his disciples to empower them for mission. The timing of these words of Jesus has caused some puzzlement, since Luke records Jesus as telling his disciples to wait in Jerusalem to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. I think that the best explanation is that here Jesus is speaking and acting prophetically. He is making a promise for the future, but expressing it in the present tense to convey the certainty of its happening. And Jesus not only empowers but gives authority, as Pastor Enoch reminded us last Sunday. Here he gives authority to declare forgiveness, or withhold forgiveness. This has also caused some debate, but I think it is to be understood in connection with the gospel. As Jesus’ disciples proclaim the good news about Jesus, they have authority to declare forgiveness of sins to those who accept the gospel, and warn those who reject it that they are rejecting God’s forgiveness.

This is a very important commission, and we should be conscious of the important task which we have been given if we are followers of Jesus. But we should not be intimidated by it, because Jesus has given us authority and empowerment. Now I want to reflect on Jesus' having sent us "as the Father sent him". How should we understand this? I believe that we should understand it in the light of the rest of John's Gospel, in the light of what Jesus says and does in that Gospel. I'll only have time, of course, to look at a few examples this morning.

**What Jesus Said *Read John 6:38-40.*** For Jesus, being sent by God the Father meant that he had to do the Father's will. So for us it means that we have to do the will of God the Father, as revealed through God the Son. Let me go back yet again to my illustration of being a child sent to the shop. I wouldn't have dreamed at that age of going anywhere other than the shop, or of buying anything other than what my mum had sent me to buy. This should be our attitude as Christians to doing God's will. Moreover, this passage reveals the core of God's will. His will is that people should believe in Jesus and have eternal life, so our task is to help people to believe in Jesus, both by our words and our actions. ***Read John 17:1-5.*** Jesus carried out the work for which the Father sent him. Jesus glorified the Father, and offered the Father's gift of eternal life to those who put their faith in him. This is the work which Jesus has given us to carry on, to point people to Jesus, the Son of God, and to invite them to receive his gift of eternal life. This involves living as obedient followers of Jesus, and it involves telling other people about Jesus when we have the opportunity.

**What Jesus Did *Read John 4:7-10.*** Here we see a particular incident where Jesus shared the good news of eternal life, expressed on this occasion through the metaphor of "living water". In this incident we see Jesus crossing a very difficult barrier in order to share his good news. Jesus is a Jew and this woman is a Samaritan. The Jews of Jesus' day saw the Samaritans as heretics, as people who had gone astray from what God had revealed. And they saw them as impure, as

people who had descended from forbidden intermarriage between Israelites and unbelieving Gentiles. For this reason, as John tells us, Jews did not associate with Samaritans. But the barrier is even greater in this instance. Jesus is a man and this Samaritan is a woman. A Jewish man would normally be particularly reluctant to speak to a Samaritan woman, and normally a Jewish teacher would be reluctant to offer his teaching to a lone woman, even a Jewish woman, let alone a Samaritan woman. Moreover, as we read on in this chapter we discover that this is not just a Samaritan woman, but an immoral Samaritan woman, a woman who is living with a man who is not her husband. If we have been sent by Jesus, as Jesus was sent by the Father, then we also have to be prepared to cross barriers. We need to be prepared to spend time with people very different from us, even people with whom we don't feel very comfortable. Most fundamentally, we need to be prepared to spend time with people who don't yet share our faith in Jesus. But we also need to cross barriers of language, barriers of race, barriers of age, barriers of social status, barriers of every kind. **Read John 13:12-15.** Having taken the role of a slave and washed his disciples' feet, Jesus on this occasion tells his disciples that his behaviour is a model for them. If we are his disciples, we will not only serve one another by doing the respected tasks, like preaching and leading, but by doing the tasks which are of low status, like moving furniture, and keeping records, and making cups of coffee, and putting leaflets in letter boxes, etc. etc. Here Jesus is talking about how we should imitate him in serving one another, but I think that it has implications for mission as well. There is a place for practical helpfulness as well as for preaching the gospel. There is a need for offering practical helpfulness to people in order to earn the right to speak about Jesus. And there is value in supporting missionary work as well as in being missionaries ourselves. There is value in giving money; there is value in praying; there is value in finding out about GiA and other missions.

**Conclusion** As a church we have adopted the summary form of our vision statement, "Growing in love for God and people". We print it in our bulletin every week. We need also to live it out. As a church and as individuals, we need to look for ways of connecting with the people around us and sharing the good news of Jesus. And we can support those who do this beyond the boundaries of our own community. We need to remember that Jesus has sent us just as God the Father sent him. This will involve consciously seeking to do God's will. This will involve living as obedient followers of Jesus, and telling people about Jesus when we have the opportunity. This will involve crossing barriers to share the love of Jesus with people. This will involve humble service, within the church and beyond. Jesus has sent us. Therefore let us go. Let us go with the eagerness of young children who feel privileged to have been sent.