

## *How's Your OUT?*

15th Weekend in Kingdomtide – August 27/28, 2005

### Sermon Background Study

*Matthew 9:35-38 (NRSV)*

<sup>35</sup>Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. <sup>36</sup>When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. <sup>37</sup>Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; <sup>38</sup>therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

*Luke 10:1-6 (NRSV)*

After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. <sup>2</sup>He said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. <sup>3</sup>Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. <sup>4</sup>Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. <sup>5</sup>Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this house!’ <sup>6</sup>And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you.

*Today, we return to our first LifeShape<sup>1</sup>: the triangle. Last week, we concentrated on our UP (our relationship with God) and our IN (our relationship with the community of believers). This week, we turn to our OUT, our relationship with the world. Are we building for the kingdom of God?*

Living out our faith in the “real world” can be pretty scary . . . at least so long as we take seriously Jesus’ commission to make disciples of all nations, to be the light to the world. What does it really mean to reach out to those who do not know that Jesus is Lord, much less place their trust in him? What does it really mean to build *for* the kingdom of God?


*OUT with it*

How does the word “evangelize” make you feel? I, for one, often feel a bit scared when I hear it. Perhaps I’ve had one too many poorly written, frighteningly drawn tracts stuck in my hands by strangers. Perhaps I’ve watched one too many TV evangelists warn me about where I’m going if I don’t get right with Jesus and send in my check. Perhaps it is my memory of the time I was “saved” at thirteen at an old-fashioned, emotional, and very loud revival. As I recall, my “saving” didn’t stick.

But this is all pretty silly isn’t it. Somehow I’ve got to get past it. Jesus is Lord. He is Lord of all creation and all persons in it – whether they acknowledge it or not, whether they’ve heard of Jesus or not. We *are* created so that we might live in a loving relationship with God. Why can it be so hard for me, indeed for many of us, to talk about Jesus with others, to reach out in love to those who, for whatever reason, have not come to embrace Jesus as their savior and shepherd?

*No time like the present*

Jesus certainly had no such hesitation and insisted that his disciples shed theirs. Today’s passage from Mark is one of many that we could have selected to illustrate Jesus’ OUT. Throughout his public ministry, Jesus went from village to village and crowd to crowd, teaching and healing and proclaiming



What could be simpler to remember: UP (intimacy with God), IN (fellowship with the community of others), and OUT (reaching out to others).

The LifeShapes offer us a vocabulary of discipleship. We might ask ourselves, “How’s my UP?,” or “How’s my IN,” or “How’s my OUT?” Am I pursuing a balanced discipleship or am I more like a two-legged stool? Could I even be trying to support myself on a single leg? Simple questions, yet profound in our quest to be passionate disciples.

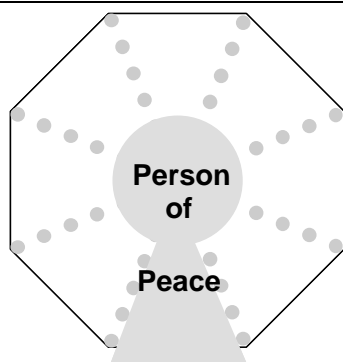
<sup>1</sup>This sermon series draws upon the work of Mike Breen and Walt Kallestad, as presented in *A Passionate Life*. This book is available in *Inspiration*, the St. Andrew bookstore. Copies are also being sold in the Narthex on Sunday mornings. We hope that you’ll pick up a copy.

the arrival of God's kingdom. Jesus had compassion for them all. They were "harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." Jesus' OUT was no less important to him than his UP and his IN.

But not only did Jesus do this work himself, he sent his own disciples out to carry it on. Though seventy people was the proverbial drop in the bucket, they were not to be intimidated by their small numbers. There may be few laborers, Jesus said, but the harvest is plentiful. They might be like lambs heading out into the wolves (ok, I'm getting scared again), but the disciples were to go. They weren't even to take anything with them. They were simply to head OUT. But how?

### *Two by two*

First, notice that Jesus sent them out in pairs. Right off, I feel better about this. God doesn't send me out by myself. I'm to take someone with me. Indeed, since God is with us in this, the pair is really a trio. And we've talked about the strength of a three-legged stool. When I attended a *Passionate Life* conference last spring, one of the group leaders said something that has really stuck with me. When someone comes forward volunteering to start a new ministry at their church, the person is immediately asked, "Who is your partner?" Until a pair is willing to lead the effort, nothing starts. Nothing depends on a single person; everything depends upon the community.



The eighth LifeShape is an octagon. Visualize a keyhole. The keyhole is the person of peace, the one whom God has made ready to welcome our help, our presence, even the good news of God's love. This LifeShape is built around seven "p's" of evangelism.

- **Presence evangelism** – This is the witnessing to Christ (spoken or not) that is available when we are simply present with a person or group. God puts people in our paths.
- **Passing relationships** – We might do no more than a little watering of the seed that God planted in someone with whom we've crossed paths.
- **Permanent relationships** – These are those who matter most to us. It is God who prepares them to hear. As Breen says, "God is never in a hurry and God is never late." Our call is to be bold when the person is ready.
- **Proclamation** – This is not about standing on street corners. It means showing outwardly, in words and actions, the love of God and the reality of God's kingdom.
- **Preparation** – Often, we are only helping prepare the soil so that another disciple might carry on the work.
- **Power** – Don't sell God short on the surprising ways that God works.
- **Perception** – The Holy Spirit will guide our abilities to perceive when a person is ready to embrace God's love . . . and when they are not.

You probably noticed in the passage from Luke that Jesus sent them out empty-handed – no purse, no bag, not even shoes. They were not even to greet passers-by on the road. That seems pretty un-Christian. What is Jesus' point? We should probably hear a call to urgency. Travel light. Travel fast. Don't even take time for the social amenities. There is no time to lose. Get on with the work and get on with it now.

There are people I know and love that I ought to invite to St. Andrew with me. I ought to talk with them about Jesus Christ. I ought to . . . but there is always next week, next month. Sure, I tell myself, I'll get around to it. Jesus wants us to understand that every day a person does not enjoy a growing relationship with him is a day that can never be regained. There is no time like the present.

### *The person of peace*

In the passage from Luke, Jesus instructs his disciples to look for those who share in their peace. In other words, the disciples need not feel burdened to proclaim the Good News to those whom God has not made ready to hear it. The disciples don't have to try to overcome those who might shake a fist at them or confront them.

How comforting this should be for all of us who get a little nervous when we hear the word "evangelism." We are not called to get in people's faces, to be rude or offensive. We are called to be loving and patient, to be prepared to tell someone of God's good news. In Peter's words, we are to be gentle and respectful (1Peter 3:15). It is God's work to transform hearts. It is God who saves, not we. If we are open to God's leadings, if we listen perceptively, we will find that God presents to us many opportunities to speak to people of peace about God's love and the lordship of Jesus Christ.

## Daily Bible Readings

*(more on the OUT)*

Before reading each passage, take a few minutes to get a sense of the context. Your study bible should help. Jot down a few questions that come to mind from your reading of the passage.

<p><b>Day 1 Romans 1:8-17</b> Paul longs to visit the Christians in Rome; Paul knows that he is obligated to bring the Good News to everyone (see v. 14-15).</p>	<p><b>Day 2 1 Thessalonians 1</b> Paul is thankful for the believers in Thessalonica. The Lord's message "rang out" from them across all of Greece (see v. 8).</p>
<p><b>Day 3 Matthew 28:18-20 &amp; Acts 1:8</b> Jesus sends out his disciples. This is no less true now than it was then.</p>	<p><b>Day 4 1 Peter 3:8-22</b> Peter is writing to comfort Christians who are suffering for being followers of Jesus and for doing good. See esp. v. 15-16. We are always to speak of Jesus Christ with "gentleness and respect." This can be easy to forget!</p>
<p><b>Day 5 Matthew 25:35-45</b> OUT is about serving, about making the kingdom of God a present reality.</p>	<p><b>Weekly Prayer Concerns</b></p>

## Sermon Notes

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### **Fall Bible Academy course schedule and registration is now on-line at [www.standrewccl.org](http://www.standrewccl.org). We've got a great line-up. Check it out!**

This fall, the St. Andrew Bible Academy will be offering a large variety of classes at convenient times. Regardless of your personal Bible background there is a place for you in the Academy. The courses are designed to challenge those who are just beginning to explore the Bible and the Christian faith, as well as those who have been faithful students for many years. Classes begin the week of Sept. 12.

Classes include *Introducing the Bible: The Drama of Scripture*; *God Is Closer Than You Think*; *David: A Man After God's Own Heart*; *Genesis: The Beginning; Is That You, God?*; *Know Why You Believe*; *Why We Are Methodists*; and *Learning from Those Who Have Gone Before Us: A History Lesson on the Christian Church*.

Here are a few comments from people who have attended a Bible Academy class:

- "The class stimulated much thought and discussion around the dinner table! Great stuff."
- "This class is just what I needed. It has helped me to deepen my faith and to understand Jesus better."
- "I highly recommend these classes as I've learned more from them than I have anywhere else. I often recommend the classes to my friends and family."
- "This class makes me feel like I really belong to St. Andrew. This is such a great group and my week gets off to such a great start. I feel warm and refreshed every time we meet."
- "These classes are such a source of spiritual growth."

### Questions for Discussion and Reflection

What does the word "evangelize" mean to you? What is your own experience with evangelism? Have you ever been evangelized? You might share some stories of occasions that you were evangelized. How did it go? How did it make you feel? Could the experience have been more positive? How so?

Have you ever reached out to others to tell them about Jesus? If so, how did it go? You might share some stories of your experiences. Do you find yourself hesitant to tell others of Jesus Christ? List some reasons why Christians might be hesitant? How could we overcome our fears and anxiety? What do you think of Breen and Kallestad's teachings about the "person of peace?" (See especially the page two text box.) How does this differ from other approaches to evangelism? Do you think it would be more or less effective than other approaches. Is "effective" even the right way to think about this?

Finally, this study concentrated on the evangelistic aspect of the OUT. But, of course, serving others is an equally important aspect of our OUT, our relationship with the world. How are two ideas we often separate - "evangelism" and "missions" - related? How might one build upon the other? How can we go about both *telling* others of God's love and actually *living it out*. It may be true that often our actions speak louder than our words, but the words matter too. In what ways do both help to carry out Jesus' commission to make disciples of all nations *and* to feed the poor?