

Living SENT *Created to Live SENT* Message Series Week Six

Welcome

Good morning! Welcome to Indian Creek. I'm glad we can share this part of our weekend together. Today we conclude the *Created to Live SENT* Message Series. I've heard great stories of how people are already living SENT. Mark your calendars to participate in the Celebration Service and the Serve Day Project. All the details are in the Worship Folder. Please use the Connection Card to indicate your participation. We want to prepare. Please know you can bring guests.

Are you being baptized? Congratulations on taking this step to publically declare your life transformation and new commitment to Jesus Christ as your Leader! We desire to celebrate with you and yours! Tell somebody! Use this opportunity to invite friends, family and co-workers to support and celebrate with you. What a great way to witness to God's redeeming love and grace! How exciting! Who knows they might decide to follow you! I can hardly wait to see what God does next!

Today

Today we focus on what it looks like to Live SENT. Let's review what we have been learning about the 3Ls and the SENT circle.

SENT Circle



We use the SENT Circle and the 3Ls to remind us of what it looks like to be a follower of Jesus. We **Love** God, **Love** people and **Live** out the love of Jesus. All of these interlocking components intersect into living a life that is SENT.

Living SENT is a life that is on mission and on purpose all the time, 24/7. In other words, it is a lifestyle.

Living SENT

Nothing is as fulfilling as finding God's purpose and plan for your life and then living SENT. It is life as God designed it to be. But to get there we all have an internal struggle to overcome, a downward pull of selfishness. Let's regress in history and see how the people of God have navigated the natural desire to put self first. We are going to see something NOT to do and hopefully we can learn from their mistakes.

There is no point in repeating the mistakes of the past.

I'd much rather let someone else make the mistakes and then learn from them versus making those mistakes myself? Wouldn't you?

This message, *Adventures in Missing the Point*, is so named because the examples will reveal just how easy it is to assume that what feels right must be right.

The strongest disciple and the best church struggles with the inborn motive to create a life that is ego-centric.

We will have to be careful as we work through these examples that we don't miss the point ourselves. The point will become more and clearer as we move through the stories.

So let's begin with a common song, *Jesus Loves Me*.

How many have heard this song? How many learned it in church? It was probably the first song I learned. This song is commonly known and loved whether we are adults or children. We love to be loved. This is foundational truth. Why don't we sing it together?

Jesus Loves Me

*Jesus loves me this I know
For the Bible tells me so
Little ones to Him belong
They are weak but He is strong
Yes Jesus loves me
Yes Jesus loves me
Yes Jesus loves
For the Bible tells me so*

How did that feel? Good? Of course it did. We are drawn to this song because we want to be loved by God. It is a comforting thought. It's true and I'm so glad! This song is all about us and God's love for us, isn't it? Jesus loves me! Why we might as well sing it with our arms wrapped around ourselves. That feels good too, doesn't it?

We need to be aware--Jesus loves me, can easily turn into...*it is all about me*.

Jesus loves me, me, me me...it's all about me.

It happens so easily and subtly. We know Jesus loves us but we must be aware that life is not about us.

This may be news to you but-- *It's not about you.*

As a matter of fact that's the first line in Rick Warren's bestselling book, *The Purpose Driven Life*,

Do you know Jesus died on the cross to redeem us and that He's created a forever family here on earth plus an eternity in heaven for us? That is true; however the Christian life is not all about us. We can start with the truth that Jesus loves us but we dare not end there.

At the same time where God is concerned it IS all about you--that is why He sent Jesus die on the cross to pay for the sin of the world. You are the lost sheep and the shepherd will not rest until He reaches you. He wants to draw you back into a loving relationship with Him.

When we follow Jesus we join Him in His mission of redemption and life becomes about OTHERS coming to know this truth. It is not about us. It is not about you. **You, we, become the searching shepherd.**

You are your brother's keeper

Let's go to the first adventure in missing the point. Turn with me to Genesis 4.

Genesis 4

For the sake of time I'm going to summarize the story but why don't you open the Bible upon or follow along on your smart phone. Somebody's got to keep me straight.

This is the story of the first brothers, Cain and Abel. God spoke to them and asked them both to bring Him a gift. Even though we don't see it clearly defined we can be sure that God gave prior instructions about the kind of sacrifice that He wanted. No doubt He wanted a blood sacrifice because it was a substitutionary gift. This was a symbol for them and for us of the kind of death of Jesus would later offer to pay for our sin.

However the exercise wasn't just about Cain and Able. It was about God telling the story of redemption. That was and is always the motive with God. He is always working in redemptive patterns.

The tendency we have is to think that the reason why we do anything is because it is all about us. You can see from what happened that Cain wanted to play by his own rules. Cain thought he got to decide what his offering should be. *After all*, he probably reasoned, *It is my offering*. He treated the will of God as optional. He believed he could pick and choose what he wanted to obey. The grain cost him little to nothing. He was a farmer. It would grow back next year. He was probably very proud of the grain he had produced.

However, God wasn't pleased. And that was what mattered. To Cain's thinking his logic was perfect. Although God loved Cain, Cain didn't get to call this play. What about Abel's gift? Abel presented a lamb. The lamb lost its life. Why? Life is the true price for sin. The Bible says that the wage of sin is death. The exchange, the consequence for sin is death.

Remember? God told us that in the beginning! He told Adam and Eve quite plainly that if they ate the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden they would die. They did eat and they set off a tragic chain of events that brought the stain of sin into every part of life. They were excluded from the Garden of Eden and God looked for an offering that would be a substitute for Adam's sin. This offering was a foreshadowing of Jesus' substitutionary death for the sin of the world.

Cain missed the point of what God had in mind which was to create a picture of redemption. This was a teaching moment to foreshadow Christ. Cain made it a competition to see who could look the best before God. He was proud of what he could do. When Cain believed he failed he eliminated the competition by killing Abel. After all gaining God's approval was all about him.

God's question to Cain was, *Where is your brother?*

Cain replied to God, *Am I my brother's keeper?*

The implied answer was, *I don't think so.*

God's implied answer was, *It is always about your brother!*

God is always moving in the direction of redemption. Cain thought this exercise was about meeting the minimum. He thought he could create his own kind of worship and could give offerings at whatever level he wanted to give. It was his life. It was his offering. He could do it his way and no one had better get in his way.

He didn't think his brother had anything to do with it. In the eyes of God the reason you worship, the reason you love God, love people and live out, IS all about your brother. The reason for redemption is that God wants everyone to know His love. It is not just me and Thee, it is we and Thee.

Us

Sometimes like Cain, we are tempted to think we can give whatever we want and God should and will be happy with it. *After all it is mine and I can do with it whatever I want, right?*

I don't have to tithe, if I don't want to. No one can tell me how to give or what to give. Isn't that the prevailing thought among Christ followers? The scriptures are clear that all that we have is from God. We are just the stewards, the managers, if you will. Did you know that the average Christ follower gives 3%? Surprised? Pleased? Do you think God is? We like to make our own rules, don't we?

We may not kill another person because they give more than we do but we might be forgetting that we are our brother's keeper and that is why we give. We give out of obedience to further God's mission of redemption.

We like Cain might be missing the point.

Let's learn a phrase today that we will repeat several times. Say this one line at a time and repeat it after me.

Living SENT

I am sent on a mission to share the light and love of Jesus until the whole world knows.

Let's try that again.

If Cain would have understood this he would have understood the redemptive purpose behind the offering.

We could think we get to choose what we will give and when and how. God may be saying something, but it is my prerogative to substitute something else because after all it is all about me. It's my life. It is my choice. It is all about me. Jesus loves me, so He will take whatever I choose to give Him.

God is moving in this world in the direction of redemption and if we don't move with Him we will get left behind. He still loves us but He IS moving and we have a choice. We can go with God or we can stay stuck right where we are.

His love is unconditional. His blessings are totally conditional.

We need to memorize this statement:

I am sent on a mission to share the light and love of Jesus until the whole world knows.

Or we may have our own adventure in missing the point. We see this again in the story of Israel as they escape from Egypt. I'm going to summarize again because this story continues through the major part of the book of Exodus

The nation of Israel

The Hebrews loved that they were God's chosen people.

The way that God rescued them from slavery in Egypt was awesome! Ten dramatic plagues brought Egypt to its knees! God split the Red Sea for the Israelites right before Pharaoh's armies' eyes! And God brought them safely through on dry ground. Then God let the waters return and it drowned their enemies--talk about eliminating the competition!

God guided the Israelites with a pillar of fire at night and a cloud by day. He gave Moses the 10 Commandments and the Elders got to eat a meal in the presence of God. God gave them manna

to eat and brought water from a rock. Over time they began to think, this is all about me. The Israelites began to see themselves as the center of the universe in God's eyes.

What they missed was this.

God did love them but His work in them was a means to an end not just an end by itself.
They were blessed to be a blessing.

The Israelites may have thought, *I want a God that is all about making me happy and meeting my needs.* When they got to the Jordan River they sent in spies. The spies came back and said, *There are giants there and someone might die.*

So the Israelites thought they had the option of telling God, *No. Thanks, but no thanks. I'll follow You if it seems to be good for me.*

They forgot who they were and why they were here on earth. They lost their identity. If they were escaped slaves then they should avoid conflict. If they were wandering nomads, they should live in the desert. But that is not who they were! They were the people of God Sent on a mission to share the light and love of Jesus until the whole world knows. That meant they were to risk everything to do the will of God. They would accomplish His will or die trying. That is the kind of obedience for which God was looking.

We

Listen up, Church, this is for us!

You will never find your identity by looking in your past.

You will never find your identity from looking to others around you to see what others say.

You will never find your identity by looking in the mirror.

You will only find your identity by looking into the eyes of Your Creator.

They missed the point. God wanted them to be His chosen people so they could display His glory, His truth and His love. And He would use them as His instrument to reach the world. They spoiled the plan when they refused to obey Him. So they wandered 40 years in the desert until the whole faithless generation died and He had a people He could use.

This is a warning for any church that thinks, *We need this building for us.*

We need this worship service for us.

We need this program, this staff and this budget for us.

This is a *me first* mentality. If there is anything left over then we will share.

God will not bless this kind of thinking in the life of an individual or a church.

The truth is everything we have is given for us to use not only for our needs but for redemption's plan. Our needs get met along the way as we live the life that is SENT.

He will give you all you need from day to day if you live for Him and make the Kingdom of God your primary concern. **Matthew 6:33 NLT**

The Israelites missed the point and they missed the Promise Land. Forty years later they came back and didn't send spies. They asked God what He wanted and they said we know who we are, *We are the people of God sent on a mission to bring light and love to the world until the whole world knows.* If God says, *Go*, we are going! When they got that straight they claimed their promised land!

For you

Are you having your own adventure in missing the point? Often people tell me about things are going wrong in their lives and they are really mad at God. That is usually a good clue all by itself. In the course of the conversation I ask if there is anything in their life where they might be out of line with God's will. Often they hedge around the issue, but eventually they confess there is something that God asked them to do that they treated as optional. When the truth is told one of the reasons they are mad at God is because He didn't do for them what they wanted Him to do. And in return, they didn't do for Him what He asked them to do.

No wonder things weren't working right.

There have been times in my life where I've been in similar positions so I'm familiar with the problem. Sometimes God's said to me, *Gary, take another lap around Mt. Sinai, like the Israelites. I'm ready to move when you are ready to obey.*

Does that hit home with anyone today? Is anyone out there taking laps around Mt. Sinai? Don't wait 40 years to get it right. Get it right with God today.

The next story is found in **Mark 11:15-17 NLT.**

When they arrived back in Jerusalem, Jesus entered the Temple and began to drive out the merchants and their customers. He knocked over the tables of the money changers and the stalls of those selling doves, and he stopped everyone from bringing in merchandise. He taught them, The Scriptures declare, "My Temple will be a called a place of prayer for all nations, but you have turned it into a den of thieves.

In this story Jesus is cleansing the temple. He went to the temple to worship and He found that the religious leaders had established a marketplace inside the temple. Jesus was livid! He made a whip of several ropes and He drove the animals and the vendors out of the temple area.

Are you familiar with what He said when He cracked those whips?

My house shall be a house of prayer.

We usually stop there. But if we do we miss the point. This outburst of zeal was not about selling things in the temple. It was not even about prayer. It was about mission.

There is more to what Jesus said! He said, *My house shall be a house of prayer for ALL nations.*

The Jews established the market in the only area where the Gentiles could pray, in the court of the Gentiles. Because they were Gentiles they did not have access to the entire temple area. This area where the Jews had strategically set up camp was also the largest of the temple courts.

Do you think there is a message there? The Jews could still worship but by the way they were going about their worship they excluded anyone who wasn't like them. They set up a marketplace in the court of the Gentiles because they didn't want them there anyway! That is what made Jesus so mad!

The Jews totally missed the point of God's work! Surprise! Surprise! It wasn't about them at all. The Jews were meant to be light and love until the whole world knew. They were to point all nations to God by the way they faithfully served Him. Instead they lived in such a way as to preclude any other Gentiles from connecting with God. Now do you understand why Jesus was so mad?

Us

My concern for us is that we could come into church today and think the church is here for us. I need this. I need that. I need this and this and this, delivered in this particular way. Oh, and if I don't get it I'm outta here. We can easily be consumers of Christianity. We shop for a church to find the one that best serves us and then we seek to make it an exclusive club.

Oh, we would never say that or look at it that way but if we look at the way most American churches do their programs, lead their worship services and spend their money, I'm afraid we would see that it is mostly about serving those who've already heard.

I recently heard a statistic in the Perspectives class that convicted me. Ninety per-cent of the resources on the world are spent on the forty per-cent of those who've already heard about Jesus! Only ten per-cent is spent on the sixty per-cent who've never heard. The really tragic part is that most of us are A-okay with that as long as it benefits us. We might criticize the Jews for their shortsightedness but I'm not sure we are much different from them.

This is why I keep coming back to this truth. Will you say it with me again?

We are the people of God sent on a mission to share His light and love until the whole world knows.

One last story.

Even the first church had this problem. After rising from the dead and spending 40 days coaching His disciples on what to do next Jesus left them with these words.

Tell people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. **Acts 1:8 NLT**

This is the Great Commission just worded differently. Those marching orders are clear.

In Acts 2 The Spirit fell and 3000 believed that one day. The first church, that new church, rejoiced and stayed in Jerusalem. They didn't go. They stayed.

That made sense though, didn't it? I mean they had 3,000 people to baptize. They had a church to organize. They had discipling to do so they substituted their own plan. They stayed in Jerusalem.

God was patient with them. In Acts 2:47 *God added to the church every day* and they stayed in Jerusalem. Chapter 3 came and went and they stayed in Jerusalem. Chapter 4 came and went and they stayed in Jerusalem. Then in Acts 5:14 we learn...*more and more disciples believed* and they stayed in Jerusalem. In Acts 6:1...*the believers rapidly multiplied* and they stayed in Jerusalem. In Acts 6:7 *the number of believers greatly increased* and they stayed in Jerusalem. Chapter 7 came and went and they stayed in Jerusalem. What does it take to get them to fulfill the Great Commission? Here is the answer.

A great wave of persecution began that day, sweeping over the church in Jerusalem, and all the believers except the apostles fled into Judea and Samaria. **Acts 8:1 NLT**

They loved receiving the Holy Spirit but they didn't obey Acts 1:8 and they didn't live as a Sent people **until** God allowed persecution. When they ran for their lives, to their credit, they told the story of Jesus as they went. They lived SENT lives but only when it was in their best interest. As they went it would appear they began to understand because from that day on you see the Church rise up to put Jesus first. Some of those same people became the first martyrs.

When they lived SENT they learned it is the only way to live.

Q. What will it take in your life and in my life for us to live SENT?
How many adventures will we have in missing the point?
It is not about self. It is about living SENT.

Say it with me again:

I am SENT on a mission to share the light and love of Jesus until the whole world knows.

He will turn earth and heaven upside down and backwards until we get it. He will even send His one and only Son to die on a cross so we will get it. He will chase out the money changers and even allow persecution all for the purpose of helping us to truly join Him in His mission.

Ultimately, He will only work with churches and individuals who choose to live Sent. If you choose self, if you substitute what you want to give up, instead of unconditionally surrendering, He will let you live like you want to live He just won't be a part of it.

One of the saddest verses in the scriptures is in the Old Testament where, in speaking about the Israelites, it is said that God gave them what they wanted and with it lean-ness in their souls.

Do you think any of that is going on with the American church?

I tell my Chinese friends that I'm praying for them and asking God to strengthen them in the persecution they face. Without missing a beat they say to me, *And we are praying for you. We think we have it better than you because the persecution actually is good for the church. None of us*

pretend. But the American church is weak and lukewarm. You are the one who needs prayer.
I've heard this multiple times from multiple Chinese friends.

Maybe part of the problem is that we've only learned one song. There is another song we should have learned along the way. Sing it with me if you know it.

Jesus Loves the Little Children

*Jesus Loves the Little Children
All the children in the world
Red and yellow black and white
They are precious in His sight
Jesus Loves the Little Children of the world*

It is about the world! It is not about us. I love *Jesus Loves Me* but we can't stop there!

Closing

What song are you singing today? Is there anything you need to say to God today? Have you treated His words as optional? Are you taking useless laps around Mt. Sinai? Is He trying to get your attention?

We are the people of God sent on a mission to share His light and love until the whole world knows.

This is what it means to live SENT. Let's pray

If there is anything you need to get right with God now is the time.

Prayer

Visit the web site